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THE HISTORY OF BRITISH CIVILIZATION

VOLUME ONE

TO
BARBARA

THE HISTORY OF BRITISH CIVILIZATION

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VOLUME ONE

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"This land of such dear souls."

"Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."

"Patriotism is not enough."

NOTE

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PROLOGUE

It is the business of the historian to tell a story, and that with as little fuss and intrusion of his own opinions as may be. But I hope it may be forgiven me if I state, very briefly, what ideal I had in mind when, nine years ago, I took in hand the writing of this book. I am under no illusion of having attained it. But the most inaccessible peak may serve as a point of direction for a long day's march.

My object was to write the sort of history that since my undergraduate days I have wanted to have on my own shelves. I say this in no spirit of ingratitude for the treatises and compilations with which they are already loaded, and in which the results of modern research are embodied. But these, however valuable in themselves, strike one rather as disconnected, and proportionately meaningless fragments of a story that yet remains to be told, the story of British or of World Civilization, the biography of mankind, presented in all its length and breadth and depth as a living unity.

No doubt Adam was a gardener, but to exalt spadework into the crown of all human endeavour is not Scripture, but Bolshevism run mad.

The idea of depth lends itself a little to misunderstanding, as suggesting something vaguely pretentious, on the lines of those so called philosophic histories into whose framework of preconceived ideas the facts have to be rammed, slammed, jammed and damned, like the Croppies into a certain gun at Athlone. Which gun appears perfectly capable, according to the latest version, of smashing the whole of Western civilization, at no distant date, against the Rock of Blastation, which is quite in the spirit of the Christian toast from which the analogy is drawn.

Perhaps I can best express my meaning if I say that the historian is not only a story teller but a witness, bound, according to the prescribed formula, to tell the whole truth—within the limits of his space—and nothing but the truth.

To take the latter requirement first. Any use of the narrative as a vehicle for the author's own preconceived ideas, any attempt to put a case is a breach of trust that disqualifies him from the honourable fellowship of historians. To label him is to damn him.

Whether he be Tory Imperialist or Philosophic Liberal, Catholic or Bolshevik, Spenglerian or Bergsonian, his service is to the truth alone, whatever it may be and wherever it may lead.

Of all labels, perhaps the most foolish and constantly applied are those of optimist and pessimist. If we are bound inevitably for the stars or the dogs, the most sensible thing to do is to lie down and be carried there, without bothering to investigate a process which nobody has, or ever has had, the least chance of influencing one way or the other. Metaphysical hair-splitting apart, a working faith in free will is the first requirement of sanity. Modern thought is already too hopelessly clogged with "isms" to justify an addition to their number, but if I were compelled to it, my own coinage would be "potentialism", meaning that the future is in our own hands, to make or mar, however much the conditions under which we labour may be affected by what a Hindu would call the Karma of our past actions.

In this story of British Civilization I have done my best to take the facts as I have found them and let them speak for themselves, in the faith that the truth, followed humbly to the end, will be its own best interpreter. If, in spite of all my efforts, I have allowed my feelings or opinions in any way to colour the narrative, I hope that they will be set aside and, as far as possible, forgiven.

By telling the whole truth I mean not, of course, the impossible task of setting down everything that ever happened, but rather that of seeing beyond "things that take the eye and have the price" to the mental and spiritual processes of which these are but casual manifestations. It is not only the small boy who prefers seeing the wheels go round to watching the hands on the dial.

Such processes are not of the kind that lend themselves to analysis and definition. The ideal historian would, I imagine, identify himself with his subject as the dryad with the tree, and the artist with his creation. Only this supreme work of art, that unfolds itself now in thought as it did once in time, is the work of no human creator.

If history be regarded, in this sense, as a living unity, it is plain that no one can hope to understand it who devotes himself to one particular set of facts labelled political, economic, literary, artistic, and so forth. The daughters of Pelias, who thought to rejuvenate their father after cutting him to pieces, were attempting no more hopeless a task than those who imagine they can study any part of history except in the light and consciousness of the whole. The

private in the noble army of specialists, so long as he remains a private, can no more achieve history than Bill Adams could win the Battle of Waterloo.

It is creative activity, in direct proportion to its creativeness, that gives us the key to the understanding of the past. The function of art, taking the word in this widest sense, is to clothe with visible or audible form the spirit of its time. No doubt the dryest of neglected documents cries aloud from its dust to be studied, but when all is said and done, there may be even more to be learnt from parish churches than pipe-rolls, and from poems than state papers. Who, for instance, after reading the fashionable type of disquisition that writes down our medieval forebears as rather commonplace and quite uninspired semi-barbarians, could retain that comforting faith were he to stand before the West Front of Wells or the Five Sisters Window at York and reflect: "These men of the thirteenth century desired and loved, and were able to create these things. And we of the twentieth . . . ?"

No doubt on a certain type of modern critic, the very thought of inspiration awakes the reaction of a sword-hilt on Mephistopheles. To such a one the artist is a mere technician wrestling, usually for bread and butter, with technical problems. Gothic church building becomes a trick of the mason's trade, for extracting money from economic churchmen who have previously extracted it from a wretched populace. Shakespeare no longer refuses to abide our question; he has been brought to earth as a pushing actor-dramatist, who sedulously tickled the groundlings' ears in order, ultimately, to cut a gentlemanly dash in his native town. The time is almost ripe for the biographic genius who shall succeed in reducing Christ to the category of Elmer Gantry. But one needs to share the reactions in question to be properly serious about the resultant theories.

And after all the best test of a theory is the working. I trust that the story itself, if faithfully told, will show, precisely and continuously, that history becomes intelligible in the light of art and art in that of history. The reader can judge for himself, by the perusal of any standard political, literary or artistic histories, how much profit or interest there is to be extracted from a story arbitrarily sliced down the middle, as if by some invisible buzz saw.

But what profit, in any case, is there to be derived from the study of the past? If that past is dead and done with, the historian is more useless than the old resurrection man, who at least dug up corpses for the use of surgeons. But the past does not die; so long as

spiritual continuity is maintained, the present life of a community is its whole accumulated past, and only by understanding that past can it understand itself or determine its future. A people unconscious of its history is like a man smitten with loss of memory, who wanders about aimlessly till he comes to grief.

Even if we take a lower standpoint than that from which history is regarded as a means of social salvation, we shall find it not only the most fruitful but the most fascinating of studies. Its interest is inexhaustible, and increases as we penetrate beyond summaries and textbooks to documents and relics, through which the past speaks to us without intermediary. In these days when the motor car and push-bike are enabling ever increasing multitudes to know the face of their mother country, a knowledge of history is able to make the whole landscape alive, to render the exploration of the humblest village an adventure of thrilling possibilities, to give a voice to the downs and to enrich the waste with memories.

The need for history has been constant since the days of ancestor worship and the bards. And the ordinary man, who instead of the living past is offered the dry bones of co-operative specialism, will seek satisfaction through less reputable channels. What research and scholarship have failed to supply, enterprising journalism, possessing neither, is forward to offer. The idol of a by no means immortal hour has but to dash off a national or universal history to achieve fame and fortune beyond the wildest dreams of scholarship. There are now, in fact, two kinds of history, one based on the most painstaking research and compiled by specialists for academic circulation, the other, based on neither research nor knowledge, dished up, more often than not, in the form of biography, by enterprising potboilers for popular consumption. Whence it comes about that the immense accumulation and sifting of historical material during the past few years has been of singularly little avail to the world at large.

The barque of Clio will therefore steer a mid course between the Scylla of specialism, and the Charybdis of journalism. I am not presumptuous enough to claim a pilot's certificate. I have but outlined an ideal that I have done no more than a very imperfect best to realize.

It is because I believe history to be a practical and living art that I have brought the story as close as possible to the present day. If I have not dealt with the Great War and its sequel, as I hope to do in a subsequent volume, it is because considerations of time and space

have prevented me. To wait for the verdict of posterity is like waiting for a river to flow by before fording it. There is no more agreement about the personalities of Chatham and Cromwell than there is about that of Mr. Lloyd George. If there is a difficulty about placing Mr. Bernard Shaw, that gentleman's own writings reveal an equal difficulty with regard to Shakespeare. But the quick have this advantage over the dead, that whereas a kick at a dead lion is a comparatively safe proposition, one at a live dog is apt to be followed by a bite or a summons. It is, I think, a rather mean-spirited calculation that takes into account the fact that dead men have no weapons and few friends.

It is sometimes said that it is impossible to take a detached view of recent events. If this is really true, history ought not to be written at all, for the man who is so much the slave of his passions is utterly lacking in historical sense and conscience, and will be equally unfair, though less easily found out, when he deals with the men and events of past ages. There, is, however, a real and serious danger that the passions not of the story teller but of his audience may be aroused by anything like a candid account of occurrences that are habitually regarded from the standpoint of the advocate or the partisan. It is by no means inconceivable that what interest there is may be concentrated on the last pages of the book to the exclusion of all the rest, and that the writer may find himself and it condemned out of hand for blasphemy against some furiously worshipped fetish of the hour. Nothing that is worth attempting is free from a risk of some kind, and I have, foolishly or not, resolved to face this one.

And now I will ask leave to step aside and allow the facts—the essential ones as far as I am capable of presenting them—to speak for themselves.

BOOK I

CATHOLIC CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER I

BRITISH CIVILIZATION

1

The Stone Age

Of the History of our land, as distinct from that of our countrymen, the two thousand years or so of authentic record form an infinitesimally small part. If we force our imaginations to compress thousands and even myriads of years into as many seconds, we shall obtain an idea of a map whose outlines are as shifting and fantastic as those of a kaleidscope, of a landscape on which the very hills rise and fall like waves, of a continual redistribution of land and water in which these British Islands are sometimes almost wholly submerged, and sometimes indistinguishably continental. Nor, until comparatively recent geological time, was it apparent whether Britain was to form part of an Eastern or a Western world, for a great Laurentian Continent at one time reached from North America across the Atlantic, and just managed to include Britain in its South Eastern corner. Then this American Continent recedes across the Atlantic, and Europe, in its turn, thrusts forward its coasts far to the West of Ireland and North of Scotland, until the English Channel is part of the Seine Basin, and the North Sea a swampy plain, through which flows the mighty Rhine, curving round the low hills of the Dogger, and receiving all the rivers of Eastern Britain.

Our soil, no less than our people, is mixed. Every geological age is represented on the patchwork of its surface, from naked, protarchean gneiss to the latest deposits of the Ice Age. Hence our abundance of minerals, a natural investment that only began to bear interest with the growth of civilization. Hence the zigzag of the coast line, with its wealth of harbours. Moreover, our islands are blessed with an excellent, if somewhat misty climate, neither too hot in summer nor too cold in winter, the result less of the Gulf

Stream of school geographies, than of our lying across the main track of the Atlantic cyclones.

It was long after the coming of man that the waters of the Channel finally swept away the land bridge of chalk that joined the Kent and Sussex Downs to the hills of North Eastern France. But even so, the white English cliffs remained full in view of the opposite shore, and once men had mastered the art of putting to sea in ships, beckoned an invitation to merchant and invader. Until a British navy arose, capable of ruling the British seas, the South-Eastern door remained temptingly open for Celt and Roman and Teuton. For practical purposes the Southern and Eastern lowlands of England might, in these early days, be considered as an outlying part of the Continental mainland, and it is significant that, before the Roman invasion, we have the record not only of Continental peoples with English branches, but even of the same King exercising sway on both sides of the water. Thus the breaking of the land bridge was less decisive than might at first have been imagined and it is only many centuries after the physical event that Britain becomes effectually insulated. The celebrated, after-dinner speaker who said, "Britain is an island, and long may she remain so," was recording a fact and expressing a wish by no means so platitudinous as might at first sight appear.

There is, in fact, a historical geography, or what perhaps one might call a "geography for practical purposes", that by no means always corresponds to the physical facts. Looked at from this point of view, it may be said that right down to the end of the Middle Ages, Western civilization grew up in a flat world, whose centre bordered somewhere on the Mediterranean, and on the extreme edge of which stood the British Isles. They are so represented on all contemporary maps. Until in the sixteenth century they came swimming into the centre of the world, these islands constituted the very outpost of civilization, an ultimate and at times almost fabulous land, reputed, as late as the fifth century, to be the dwelling place of dead men.

And yet from the earliest human times, long before she had taken recognizable shape or become separated from the Continent, Britain had her part in the building up of civilization. At Piltdown, in Sussex, has been unearthed the skull of so primitive a human being that some authorities have even posited a chimpanzee to account for his presumptive lower jaw. Some of the earliest attempts at tools, flints chipped so crudely that it is hard to distinguish man's

work from that of nature, have been discovered in England, largely through the assiduity of that indefatiguable field-worker, Benjamin Harrison, of Ightham in Kent. We know that our forests were at one time disputed with the hyena and mammoth by an extinct breed of wild men, with beetling brows, bull necks and gross jaws, and that these somehow melted away before the advance of magnificent broad-faced and long-headed giants, of a brain capacity by no means inferior to our own, who had walked from Africa to Italy, or according to another theory had escaped Eastward from a submerged continent in the Atlantic, and who had ranged at will, after their game, between what are now France and England. These men, though living in caves, without the knowledge of agriculture or any tools save those of flint and bone, had yet the mastery of speech and fire, included artists and craftsmen of no mean capacity, and appear to have had at least enough religion to believe in the survival of the dead, whose bodies they plastered with red ochre, the colour of life. But we have no certain evidence of their having left any direct heritage of blood or culture, and in recording the continuous development of our civilization we are compelled, though regretfully, to pass them by.

We reach firmer ground, and the consciousness of kinship when, after an uncertain period of transition, which does not necessarily involve any breach of continuity, we find our island, now really an island and past the rigours of the last ice age, tenanted by a new race of stone-using men, dark, long-headed and short-statured, of the Iberian or Mediterranean stock, or stocks. By this time a change has come about in man's way of life as revolutionary, though not as sudden, as any recorded in historic times. The old cave dweller had been a hunter, pure and simple, his hand against every beast, and every fang and horn against him. Now, however, man makes the ox his slave and the dog his ally. While his polished stone axes and arrows along with his hounds render him a mightier hunter than before, he is also a herdsman.

And not only a herdsman, for at a time which our evidence does not permit us more than to conjecture, he learns to supplement his bag by the proceeds of a primitive kind of agriculture. It can have amounted to little more than a scratching of the soil with hand ploughs of wood or horn, and a hacking off of the light and scanty ears by dint of incredible labour with stone sickles, but the number of mouths was proportionately few and digestions tough. Sooner or later, the art of cooking follows in the wake of fire-making, and

man puts another stage of development between himself and the animal.

Compared with the splendid breed of Nimrods that had preceded them, the swart, wiry hillmen of the new age might seem to be of a less attractive, or at anyrate a less romantic type, for the artistic impulse that adorned cave walls is now lost, or diverted to craftsmanship such as " ripple-work " in stone, or pattern markings on earthenware. But if old stone man is the father of painting, new stone man may claim with equal justice to be the father of architecture. His creative energy has moulded the very landscape to his desire, and it may well be that some of his colossal earthworks will outlast the proudest monuments of subsequent ages.

To understand the greatness and limitations of his achievement, we must first realize within what a very small area it was confined. Where we now see tilled fields and spreading pastures, where towns smoke and villages nestle, were vast tracts of green or brown forest, dreary expanses of fen, and the broad swamps and bogs that filled the river valleys, at a time when rainfall was heavier and springs higher up than today. The lord of the Lowlands was not Man but Wolf. Parties of hunters might penetrate, not without fear of more than mortal terrors, into the darkest woodland recesses, but the active hostility of fangs gleaming through the brake, and the resistence, exuberant yet passive, of massed vegetation, drove man, with his cattle and his seeds to the comparative safety of heath and moorland and downside, a safety that he set himself to secure by a toil and ingenuity hard for us to imagine. Or when he did descend, it was most often to some sheet of marshy water, where he could construct his dwellings on piles, and come and go in dug-out canoes, not a farmer but a fisherman.

Difficult as it is to reconstruct the experiences of these our forefathers, there is one, and that the most impressive and pregnant of all, that we can to some extent realize. This was when the light faded out of the sky, and the beast was abroad in the forest. Those who have ever passed a night in the jungle can realize what weird and threatening cries must have arisen from that vast No-man's-land below. And in the long nights of what are still known as the wolf months, you could never tell when a rush of grey forms might not debouch from the trees, mad with cattle-hunger, and the watch-fires would throw their ruddy flicker on man's struggle, along the top of his earthen rampart, to hurl back the beast's constantly renewed counter-offensive.

Some such vision as this we must acquire if we want to grasp the meaning of that civilization of the hills, when man's paths were ridgeways with the great earthworks dotted along them like beads on a string. It is a subject full of pitfalls for the historian, for written evidence we have none, and the record of the hills has been scored over again and again, so that while on the one hand experts may be deducing things about neolithic man from the evidence of Victorian dew-ponds, on the other, a white horse, of obviously modern design, may prove to be a symbol of immemorial antiquity brought, with fiendish ingenuity, up to date.

Of one thing, however, we may be certain. These men of the downs and meres, whatever may have been the precise means by which they solved the many problems of their daily life, did, with their limited means, evolve a civilization in the fullest and noblest sense, that is to say, they not only contrived to live, but had the means and leisure to live well according to their lights and ideals. How else can we account for the stupendous phenomenon of the stone temple at Avebury in Wiltshire, with its neighbour, the man-made hill of Silbury, the most stupendous of all man's constructions out of the earth from which he springs?

Take your stand, for choice, on the ramparts that surge like petrified waves over the crest of Oldbury Down, and there beneath you, lying like Metz amid its ring of fortresses, Barbury, Rybury, Martinsell and the rest, lies what must have been a capital [1] in days when London was a forest and a swamp. Standing, as it did, at the union of the watersheds and chief nodal point of the ridgeways, and containing rich supplies of flint, to be had for the quarrying, it may fairly be called not only the London but the Manchester of that upland civilization. The enormous stones have nearly all disappeared, thanks to the skill of one of those progressive eighteenth century farmers, who first heated and then chilled them in order to crack them up into something useful. But a few of that titanic company remain to testify what manner of men they were who could plan and carry through so stupendous and, from a material standpoint, so profitless a task as that of their erection. Here, in presence of these awful stones, pilgrims and barterers, who had tramped the ridgeways from fastness to fastness, could perhaps relax their vigilance and dream and worship in peace.

It is not to be believed that this civilization, of which

[1] Though, of course, not of England, nor more, necessarily, than of some part of the Southern Uplands.

Avebury was the centre, was a purely native product. It would have been at its height, according to what seems the most probable conjecture, some time during the third millenium B.C. This was the golden age of the great peaceful kingdom of the Nile valley, which Bedouin conquest had not yet turned into imperialist courses. We need not follow those adventurous theorists, who make a King Charles's head of the Sun Child Pharaoh's, when we mark the traces of Egyptian influence round about Avebury. Silbury Hill strikes you at once, even at a distance, as a literal translation of the great Cairo pyramids from stone into earth. Hard by are two of that family of long, chambered barrows whose likeness to the Egyptian mastaba tombs seems too exact to admit of coincidence.[1]

Avebury stones would appear to be symbols of a cult more widespread, even, than the Catholic Christianity that inspired the Gothic cathedrals. We can trace its path, in great stone monuments, round the Mediterranean and Atlantic seaboards, to the Orkneys and, much more doubtfully, across the Pacific to Mexico and Peru. But to talk of direct Egyptian influence, or even to dogmatize as to the route by which the new civilization was brought to our shores, would be to go beyond the limits of our evidence. It is most probable that Egyptian culture was transmitted, in a more or less diluted form, by those bold mariners of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Cretans and Phoenicians. And even in these early days, it may not have been necessary for it to have come all the way round by the sea route. There was, as there is nowadays for Biscay-fearing voyagers, a possible short cut across the mainland by way of the Rhône gate, and a longer route by the Danube and Rhine valleys. The big-stone monuments of the Île de France present sufficiently striking analogies with those of England to make it plausible that one of these and not the sea route was the main path by which the higher civilization reached our shores.[2]

It was obvious what was the attraction of Britain for these early adventurers. Flint for the stone age, copper and tin for the bronze, gold and pearls, lead and jet, were among its products, and the rough stone monuments are usually found in the neighbourhood of one or other of them, though the dolmens of Ireland are a conspicuous exception.

[1] It is just possible, in view of the linear trend of Egyptian culture, that in the stone rows and avenues of Dartmoor and Brittany we may have a faint reflection of what Herr Spengler calls its "rhythmically ordered sequence of spaces". But this is a long shot, which experts may signal a miss.

[2] See T. D. Kendrick, *The Axe Age*.

Our ancestors cannot have taken from those mysterious and perhaps uncommunicative traders from overseas more than hints for improving the way of life that they themselves had to discover. The problems of the English downs were not those of the Nile valley, and necessity is an exacting task master. How hard the conditions of life must have been is evinced by the dwarfish stature of the female as compared with the male skeletons. It is evident on which sex the brunt of the hard times must have fallen.

And yet, in spite of all, our ancestors were able to provide such an overplus of resources and labour, after keeping the wolf from the door in the literal, as well as the metaphorical sense, that some of them, at anyrate, were able to take more thought for their eternal habitations, in the humped magnificence of chambered long barrows, than for the branch-roofed dug-outs in which they slept and cooked. It must have been a rare grandeur of soul that demanded expression in Avebury.

A recent investigator, Mr. H. J. Massingham, has laid stress on another aspect of this downland civilization. It was, he maintains, eminently peaceful, and implies a unity of social control, centring probably at Avebury. No doubt he has grasped the root of the matter, in that organized war is a diseased growth upon civilization, that unless cut out, will prove ultimately fatal, but we must beware of colouring our story, even for the best of purposes, and the evidence of earth and stones is enough to prove that even the Downlander was fully alive to the necessities of defence. His camps are almost invariably sited with the eye of a military engineer, with a view to taking the utmost advantage of the ground. When I visited Cadbury Camp, that enormous, quadruple-ringed hill fortress that is the traditional site of Arthur's Camelot, I was informed that an artillery officer, who had just been there, had remarked that nobody in the last war could have taught these fellows anything. Maiden Castle, near Dorchester, is as elaborate a defensive work as any of Vauban or Brialmont. And that war was no new invention is proved by the evidence of an arrow, well and truly shot into some poor fellow's spinal column, in Southern France, before ever the New Stone Age had dawned.

But that our dark hillmen were on the whole peaceful fellows is the most probable conclusion. For one thing, organized war must have been almost a physical impossibility when the only tracks were along the top of the downs, and these were blocked at frequent intervals by earthworks practically impregnable. That the tracks

were used for commerce between different parts of the country is suggested by finds in tombs and elsewhere. How late the fortifications may have been completed, how far they were intended to make assurance doubly sure against the beast, what mystic or symbolic meaning may have been attached to the circles, are things at which we can only guess. Certainly the great metropolitan cathedral of Avebury, with its ditch on the inside, was something worse than unfortified, and on Dartmoor, Devonshire commonsense has not erred in calling its ancient enclosures "pounds" instead of camps.

We believe that if we could transport ourselves back to what we know as the Neolithic Age, we should find our fathers occupied from day to day with tasks the very reverse of military. The tracks worn by countless generations of cattle,[1] the lynchets or hill terraces, of which you may see the precise counterpart in use today on the sides of the Himalayan valleys, the dew-ponds by which the problem of water-supply was so ingeniously solved, the first specimens of British pottery—these things tell their own tale of a long, laborious struggle with the most primitive appliances, not of man against man, but of man against nature, a struggle not without its rewards.

2

Celtic Britain

Some time in the first half of the second millennium before Christ, the use of bronze, which is an alloy of copper and tin, puts out of date the stone craft of our Iberian-skulled ancestors. And the Bronze Age in these islands lasts until bronze is supplemented by iron some time about the fifth century before Christ. More precise, in the absence of any written contemporary record, it is impossible to be.

During this time, the population of Britain was becoming ever more mixed by dint of successive new arrivals. Here again the evidence is so scanty, and what happened, in all probability, so far from simple, that any attempt at a precise statement would be misleading. We know that the Neolithic Age saw the arrival of a round-headed breed of men who deposited the bodies or ashes of their dead in round barrows, mere anthills compared with the stately long barrows of the ancient inhabitants. These men of the Alpine race, as it is called, seem to have been absorbed, in the course of time, amid an obstinately long-headed population. It was by some of these

[1] See *Neolithic Dew-ponds and Cattle-ways*, by A. J. and G. Hubbard.

round-heads, though perhaps not by the first arrivals,[1] that bronze appears to have been introduced to our shores.

The next great wave of immigration, according to most orthodox authorities, is that of the " Q speaking " Goidelic or Gaelic vanguard of the Celtic peoples. Who the Celts were and where they came from are questions on which most experts disagree, and in the sense in which that most elusive word was used in Roman times, it probably covers a heterogeneous assortment of Barbarian tribes, fair-haired in Central Europe and mixed up with darker elements further West. But as in Hindustan the inhabitants, in spite of every formal diversity, possess a certain unmistakable similarity of outlook which differentiates them from other peoples, so, however misleading may be the term Celtic Race, the Celtic temperament does undoubtedly connote an important, even if an undefinable reality. The Britons whom Caesar found, with their mystic Druid rites, their wild rushes and lack of staying power, may from the ethnologist's standpoint have constituted an inextricably mixed stock, but Celtic they were, if not in skull and only partly in ancestry, at least in heart and disposition.

Another wave or series of waves, this time of " P speaking " Cymric or Brythonic Celts, began to arrive about 500 B.C. These were of the same stock as the Belgae, who occupied the North Eastern of the three parts into which, according to Caesar, Gaul was divided. Armed with iron weapons, they appear to have mastered the country south of the Tweed, up to the foothills of what is now known as the Celtic fringe. The connection with the tribes on the other side of the Channel seems to have been fairly intimate, to judge by the coincidence of tribal names, and by the fact that the Gauls looked to Britain, much as Catholics nowadays look to Rome, as a fountain-head of religious lore.

All this time a pretty continuous progress had been made in the business of mastering nature and raising the standard of living. The decisive advantage conferred on man by his new command of metals was that it armed him against beast and tree to undertake the gradual conquest of the plains. When the Romans arrived, the ridgeways had ceased to be the main highways of communication, and the hill forts, though not all of them deserted, had lost their importance. The battle between man and beast had been practically decided, and man was now able to make his dwelling and pasture

[1] The so-called Beaker men. The first of them were acquainted with copper, if not its alloy.

his cattle in the lowlands without too much fear of what Mr. Kipling has so happily named "Shepherd of the Twilight", "Feet in the Night", "Dog without a Master", and "Devil in the Dusk". By the time the Romans arrived, quite a high standard of material civilization had been attained. The Briton had not only learned to feed, clothe and house himself, but he was beginning to acquire a taste for comforts and even luxuries. Towns, of a sort, were springing up at centres of government and trade, and roads linked them together. Not only were there the ancient hillside trackways, like the Icknield Road and the Pilgrim's Way, but it is at least arguable that main Roman roads, such as the Watling and Ermine Streets, were more often than not British roads that the Romans found and no doubt improved out of recognition. Corn was grown not only for home consumption but for export; exchange value had ceased to be reckoned in iron bars, and coins were struck in quaint and often beautiful designs. A small but significant phenomenon is the extent to which the art of make-up had been mastered by the ladies of the time, who might have furnished some useful hints even to a modern *débutante*.

With the coming of the Celt, and particularly of the iron-using Brython, civilization enters upon a new and more ominous phase. In contrast to the peaceful folk of the downs, the Celts were thoroughly acquainted with the business of organized war, and Caesar, writing of those in Gaul, describes how, year in, year out, the tribes were engaged in injuring each other or defending themselves from injury. The art of war kept pace with that of working metals. The bronze dagger lengthened into the sword, and swords and shields were worked with a loving care and elaboration of ornament that marks them as their owners' dearest possessions. The warlike horse joined the peaceful ox in a common servitude, and it is not unlikely that man's pride in this latest acquisition is commemorated in at least one of the white horses on the chalk downs. As a natural sequel came the war chariot, thoughtfully provided with scythes for the cutting of hostile flesh.

What this habit of war brought in its train we can gather from one or two indications. The ghastly rites of human sacrifice appear to have been an essential feature of the prevailing religion, though the evidence for it is chiefly by Gaulish and Irish analogy. And we know, by the mute witness of the spade, the fate that, with fearful suddenness, must have overwhelmed the lovely and highly civilized lake village of Glastonbury, a tragedy probably typical of countless others, and as piteous as the one enacted on the same

holy ground more than fifteen centuries later at the dissolution of the monastery. The dwellings burnt, the inhabitants murdered, skulls cloven, heads tossed about, the fruits of art and industry sunk in the mere,[1] things the like of which we know only too well must be under war time conditions.

So far we have merely been repeating what is to be found in every textbook on prehistoric Britain. But of recent years there has been a tendency to suspect that this orthodox and comparatively simple story of stone to bronze and bronze to iron, of Iberian to Alpine, Alpine to Goidel, and Goidel to Brython, though true as far as it goes, leaves out an essential, perhaps the most important part of the truth. The index of the skull is not that of the soul, but the spiritual life of our remote ancestors has been hard to reconstruct owing to the absence of written records, whereas such solid things as skulls, pottery, weapons and ornaments are comparatively easy to collect and classify. An excess of caution is beyond doubt a fault on the right side in a historian, but to concentrate on the material or econonic aspect of any age to the neglect of the ideas that are to economics as the driving power to the machine, is not only to resign oneself to superficiality, but to create a dangerously misleading impression.

To our Celtic and Iberian ancestors, there is no doubt that the merely business side of life, though important enough, was less important than the spiritual, or, if you will, magical. The most solid relics they have left us, the temple of Stonehenge, the stone circles of Avebury, the colossal earth pyramid of Silbury, the innumerable barrows, cists, menhirs, and dolmens, can hardly have been the work of economic men, determined to compass a practical object with the utmost economy of means.

The same remark applies to the many equally remarkable constructions not above, but beneath the earth. There are the mysterious dene-holes, so frequent in the South East chalk country, underground caverns burrowed deep into mother earth, entered by cylindrical shafts, and almost invariably on the same hexagonal pattern of apsed side-chambers. There is the yet greater marvel of the vast, artificial cave system in the chalk at Chislehurst, of which some twenty to thirty miles have as yet been identified, but whose full extent defies conjecture, a maze of lofty corridors with a uniform summer and winter temperature of some fifty degrees and an atmosphere that the porous chalk keeps fresh and sweet.

[1] See Ault, *Life in Ancient Britain*, p. 233.

Here there are found what were to all appearance altar slabs, carefully oriented, with side chambers curiously suggestive of the sedilia in churches, and designed with such acoustic forethought that a voice from the altar will resound through the whole adjacent system of corridors. The materialist school, that will accept any miracle to explain away man's spiritual nature, will have us believe that our ancestors were such abject fools as to burrow shafts when they could have hewn the chalk out of the hill-side, and tie themselves, for no conceivable reason, to a hexagonal pattern of mining passages. And those who like to believe that such a system as that of Chislehurst was a mere corn store, had better go on a Thursday evening, to trudge, with a lantern, through some three miles of it, and think what their theory implies. Neither the men nor the facts were quite so simple as some learned experts believe, and are.

These visible and tangible witnesses are by no means the only ones. More and more of recent years has it been recognized that our Celtic ancestors (if we may use "Celtic" in a spiritual and cultural, though not necessarily in a racial sense) created for themselves a world of symbolism, one in which the symbol had frequently greater importance than the reality. Thus in Celtic art the tendency is to eschew any attempt at imitating nature, to find expression not in the likeness of things seen, but in patterns and curves that give visible form to things apprehended inwardly. And of this symbolism, so rich and so fantastic, we have the tokens, could we but interpret them aright, in a multitude of place names, in numerous quaint customs either surviving or only recently extinct, in the traditions of the common people and even in the rhymes and fairy stories of the children. It was not so long ago that the maypole was a common sight on village greens, that Daddy Death was carried out of the village, and the Spring, the Man in Green, brought in, that the wren was hunted on Christmas Eve and folk leapt through Beltane or Baal fires on May Day. Not by any means all of these survivals were merely quaint and picturesque, some of them were cruelly and hideously wrong-headed—the burning of animals, for instance, to stop murrain, and of human beings to circumvent the black arts.

Unfortunately it is the grotesque and monstrous side of the ancient British faith, or faiths, that has made the most vivid impression upon the imagination of modern Britons. First impressions are notoriously the strongest, and the earliest authority on the Gaulish Druidical cult, which was said to have been derived from that of

Britain, is furnished by the memoirs of the Roman pro-consul, Julius Caesar. A soldier-politician, writing up his own career as conqueror of Gaul, was not likely to be the most sympathetic commentator on his victims' religion. It is as if the young Arthur Wellesley had inserted into an account of his campaigns two or three paragraphs dealing with Hindu religious philosophy. Would not he too have summed up the matter in a sentence, "The nation . . . is exceedingly devoted to superstitious rites?"

Of recent years enough has come to light to make it apparent that our ancestors had a very real faith underlying their symbolism, though, like their cousins in India, they were too apt to take the symbol for the reality and act accordingly. It is at least a possibility that hundreds of years before Christ, some of our dying fathers may have turned their eyes to the cross, the cross of the sun-god, which we now know to be a symbol of immemorial antiquity, and of whose presence in Britain relics remain to testify. And was not this very sun-cult, that the cross typified, a reaching after some divine and transcendent power, the source of all life, of all energy? The Druid doctrine, which was passed from mouth to mouth, has perished with the Druids, the priestly and educated caste, but the tantalizingly meagre scraps of information that have come down to us point to its having included the belief in one Supreme Being who is manifested and known by the phenomena of nature, in a number of subordinate deities and a spirit world, in an immortal soul and its transmigration after death. It is not improbable, considering that the evidence points to the fact of the Druid religion having been imposed or grafted on more primitive cults of the aborigines, that this priestly caste, like that of the Hindu Brahmans, had its own esoteric doctrine which it kept pure and separate from the more barbarous ritual with which it awed the uninitiated.[1]

The best proof, after all, that a lofty faith did exist in England hundreds of years before the coming of the Roman, is that such a faith is still able to speak to us in language more direct and conclusive than that of any book. The great temple of Stonehenge, whether it be Druid or pre-Druid, represents an advance in constructional technique beyond the larger and probably even more imposing Avebury. Stonehenge is as eloquent, even in ruin, as Amiens and

[1] The parallel with the Brahmans is, to say the least of it, suggestive, and the words of Saint Chrysostom to the effect that the proudest kings were subservient to the Druids, and Caesar's description of the priestly and military orders among the Gauls, might equally have been written of India. We have even the mention, in Caesar, of funeral ceremonies embodying the principle of suttee.

Westminster, and he must be dull indeed who can stand in the shadow of those enormous trilithons, and fail to realize that the men who compassed the immense achievement—so immense that even modern writers have been found who attribute it to magic—of transporting and erecting this, for all mundane purposes, quite useless edifice, must have had dreams and aspirations, and a leisure to indulge in them, that we, of a hustled and nerve-racked generation, may well envy them.

Recent research and speculation—for it is not always easy to say where the one ends and the other begins—have made it increasingly apparent that these cults, from that of the great stone monuments with their Egyptian inspiration, to the Druidism reported on by Caesar, were no insular or tribal developments, but have their close analogies among those peoples of the Near East who were in the van of civilization during the two or three millenniums before the rise of Rome. This is a field that has hitherto been largely left to freelances, and it is perhaps a pity that a closer liaison has not been maintained between orthodox historians, and imaginative pioneers, the boldness of whose conclusions is apt to take one's breath away, and demands from the reader exercise of the critical faculty not always apparent in the author. The argument from words, of which the freelance is so glibly prolific, is one that ought to be used with the utmost caution, considering how easy it is, with a little ingenuity, to make out a philological case for the wildest absurdity. But after we have sifted mere guesswork from reasonably established conclusions, enough, we think, will remain to convince the unbiassed reader that some part of the civilization of the East was transmitted, by one means or another, to these islands, and that the evidence for this, in place-names, monuments and folk memory, is too overwhelming to be gainsaid.

If this be so—and space forbids us to set out the evidence in detail—it follows that if new blood came to Britain principally by the South Eastern Gate, we acquired what is even more important, new ideas, from Mediterranean traffickers, no doubt mainly recruited among those Phoenician dwellers on the coast of Syria who are usually described as Semites, but whom Dr. L. A. Waddell[1] adduces reasons for believing to be a branch of the Aryan-Hittite or Khatti stock.

It is certainly remarkable that Dr. Waddell has deciphered an inscription on the Newton stone, in the North of Scotland, in

[1] In *The Phoenician Origin of the Britons, Scots and Anglo-Saxons.*

parallel Celtic Ogham and Phoenician lettering, which states that a sun-cross or swastika is erected to Bil (or Bel or Baal) by a devotee calling himself Ikhar of Cilicia, the Prwt or Briton, of the tribe Khilani, a word signifying Hittite palace dweller. Moreover, this same investigator claims to have deciphered the language of "cup-markings" which is common to British and Hittite coins and inscriptions, and to have found, among other similar identities, that the mysterious Tascio of British coins, to account for whose existence a King called Tasciovanus has been conveniently invented, was, in fact, none other than the Hittite corn god Teshub, distinguished by five cup-markings, and the original of the Archangel Michael. And if Mr. Harold Bayley,[1] working on wholly independent lines, can make good his claim to have discovered all over Britain evidences of the worship of the Cretan Varvara, or Barbara, this would not contradict but supplement the Hittite theory, and in fact strengthen it, in so far as Dr. Waddell can maintain his thesis that Crete was colonized and civilized by the Phoenicians.

We can say then that a strong, though not yet an overwhelming case, has been established for the permeation of Ancient Britain by ideas and culture from the Eastern Mediterranean. But when writers like Dr. Waddell go on to assert an ancestry not only of ideas but of blood, they seem to be pushing conclusions further than their own evidence warrants. The fact of our being a Bible-reading people does not make us children of Abraham, nor would the cult of a Phoenician sun-god and a Hittite archangel afford the slightest proof of Hittite-Phoenician descent. It is natural to men of all ages to love the highest when they see it, or think they see it, and just as the Kentish pagans cheerfully scrapped their old gods at the preaching of Augustine, so, we may well imagine, the Iberian or Celtic inhabitants of Britain allowed themselves to be conquered by the superior culture that came to them from the unknown lands beyond the seas. The physical difficulties of transporting any but a very few immigrants by a long sea voyage must have been well-nigh prohibitive, though, on the other hand, there is certainly reason for believing that the Goidelic conquerors of Ireland set sail from the Continent. But the Dover crossing is so obviously fitted for invasion or immigration in force, that the probabilities are almost overwhelming that the great majority of new-comers arrived this way.

It is, however, quite conceivable, even if it cannot be proved,

[1] In *Archaic England.*

that small parties of adventurers, endued with superior cunning or armed with superior weapons, may have arrived by the South-Western route, and established the same sort of political mastery as Pizarro and his handful of Spaniards did over the empire of the Incas. There is a definite tradition, believed for centuries throughout the length and breadth of the land, that Britain was conquered by a Trojan adventurer called Brutus, who was the founder of a line of kings. This story, which is told in the chronicle of Nennius towards the end of the eighth century, and repeated, with much elaboration, by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth, has been altogether scouted of recent years, and certainly as Geoffrey tells it it seems wild enough, but perhaps historians have been too sweeping in assuming that there is no foundation for it whatever. Mr. Bayley may or may not be right in discovering countless references to Troy in place-names. Dr. Waddell is certainly going too far in accepting the story practically as it stands, and identifying Brutus with the Homeric Peirithoos; but that some Mediterranean conquistador may have established his sway over a considerable part of Britain, and imposed his native religion and culture on his subjects, is a story by no means improbable in itself, however much the tradition of centuries may have fogged it with absurdities.

Even if we persist in treating the whole Brutus legend as a palpable invention, we shall be on safe ground in saying that for centuries before the coming of the Roman, Britain, in spite of her remoteness from the main centres of civilization, was the home of a culture by no means contemptible. Thanks to the overseas trade-route from the Mediterranean, her inhabitants were kept in touch with the leaders of human progress, and they at least profited enough thereby to attain a very fair standard of material well-being, together with a faith and symbolism fired with poetic imagination, and not improbably having its source in an elevated philosophy.

3

The Coming of Rome

During the Iron Age in Britain, the centre of the civilized world was shifting Westward. Just as the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian Empires had grown up in river valleys, so now the Mediterranean Sea formed the main highway of communication and bond of unity for an enormous Empire that came to include all the countries round its shores, and pushed out its frontiers, to the utmost limit of its

strength, in every direction. This Mediterranean, or Roman power came nearer to realizing the ideal of a world Empire than any other political organization before or since, because for most practical purposes of that age, Rome occupied the centre of a flat world. The civilizations of India and China were out of the picture and America might as well have been on another planet. To the Roman citizen of the first or second centuries, the boundaries of civilization were those of the Roman Law and Roman Peace. All beyond was a wilderness of waters or of barbarism.

Were we less in the habit of accepting everything that has ever happened as a matter of course, the mere fact of such a power maintaining itself for centuries would be a perpetual wonder, and would go far to justify the terrible price exacted. When mechanical transport was unknown and communications were slow and difficult, the problem of exercising one continuous and orderly sovereignty over vast tracts of territory was almost insoluble. The Greek city states were prudent enough to refrain from the attempt, the secular governments of the Middle Ages generally found it beyond their strength. Assyria had been more a raiding than a governing power, and the great kings of Persia had been hard put to it to control the satraps to whose sway they had committed the provinces of their unwieldly empire.

Rome faced the problem and solved it. From the Euphrates to the Atlantic, from the Pennines to the Sahara, men enjoyed the same peace, obeyed the same law, and shared in the benefits of the same civilization. This was maintained without the need or display of military force; away from the frontiers and the capital a soldier was a comparatively rare sight, and the idea of throwing off the Roman yoke was one that never occurred to anyone, even as a possibility. The slowness of communications was compensated for by a magnificent system of roads, and by the fact that the Mediterranean was so effectively policed as to form a reasonably safe highway. Ideas and commodities passed freely throughout the length and breadth of the Empire.

The crowning achievement of Rome was her realization that human affairs could be ordered on rational and scientific lines, without more than a polite show of mystic or fundamental sanctions. The Greeks had already attempted this in the limited sphere of the city state, but the limits of Roman Law were those of the Western civilized world. Only the accident of her having to strike an average among the laws of the peoples, nations and

languages who flocked to trade with her, revealed to Rome the possibility of man ordering his relations with his fellows according to the dictates of reason and commonsense. Thus the Roman Law marks an important advance towards what we may take to be the ultimate goal of civilization, the assumption by mankind of conscious control over its own destinies.

The price paid for these benefits was enormous. Every expansion of her circumference into the void was like increasing the span of a bridge—the strain on the structure increased in geometrical proportion. The old republican spirit had been bled to death in the process of expansion, the individuality of the conquered peoples was crushed beyond the possiblity of revival, and the government became a vast, centralized taxing machine, a dead weight upon the soul. Roman Law, as it took shape under the great jurists of the Empire, was determined by these conditions. It was the law of a sovereign power trying to impose its will on the world from a centre. Everything, except in matters of local government where the Empire countenanced a certain elasticity, was centred in the person of the divine Emperor. Every consideration was subordinated to the smooth working of the machine. The sovereign conducted the vast business of keeping the world in order nominally according to his will, but really by an elaborate routine of which he himself was the slave. The so-called palaces of the Caesars that hid the Palatine were for the most part hives of government offices. The machine, already strained to the utmost limit of its capacity, could not afford to let individual rights, or the rights of corporate bodies, interfere with its functioning. Roman Law was therefore careless of liberty and still more of what in England were to be known as liberties; it worked from the top downwards, and it aimed at a logical uniformity in ordering the relations of men with each other.

Such was the spirit of the Roman rule. There was one standard of civilization, and everywhere, where the writ of Caesar ran, that standard was imposed and maintained so much as a matter of course that no one dreamed of non-conformity. With very trifling variations, dictated by the difference of local resources and perhaps dying vestiges of tradition, the Roman town, the Roman land system, the Roman way of life generally, is the same at Silchester and at Carthage, at Verona and at Timgad. The same very solid, very portentious, and slightly vulgar corruption of Greek architecture, the same pretty and utterly soulless painted and sculptured gods and mythological incidents, the same circular arenas for the perpetration

of the same devilries; the same solidly efficient drainage and aqueducts and central heating. No doubt it was civilization that Rome had imposed on her world, a reign of elegance and grandeur, of law and the free interchange of ideas, but in striving to gain the whole world, Rome had necessarily sacrificed her own soul and that of the peoples on whom her rule fell. It was not life she gave—for life is individuality and thrives by difference—but euthanasia. One can feel something of the weight of Rome even in those grim ruins of hers, those vaults and columns that weigh upon the mind with an almost palpable oppression.

It has been necessary thus to digress from our story of British civilization, because, once the shadow of Rome fell upon any people, it ceased to have a history of its own. Considering how advanced was the state of material civilization in that part of our island which came under her full sway and peace, it is remarkable how few records have come down to us from nearly four centuries of occupation. The fact is that Roman Britain was a geographical expression applied to a corner of territory at the back of the Mediterranean Hinterland, and as such, with no particular history worth recording. Behind the screen of the legions there was no British people or even group of peoples, but just Roman provincials, rather less advanced in the way of civilization, as being more remote from the centre, than the average of provincials.

Even before the first landing, it was evident that England was beginning to be drawn into the sphere of Roman influence. The use of Latin words and classical mythology on coins, of dice and water clocks, point in this direction. But until the proconsulship of Julius Caesar in Gaul, Rome must have seemed to the Britons much as Carthage and Tyre had seemed to their ancestors, something vast and magnificent, but comfortably remote. And then, with terrifying suddenness, an army, that appeared invincible, began overrunning Gaul, and made its appearance on the opposite coast of the Channel. Now the lowlands of Britain were a natural continuation of those of Northern Gaul; the two were like the gradually sloping sides of a vast, shallow valley, whose river had widened into a sea channel. And it was the obvious thing for a conqueror of Gaul to round off his task by taking in the English lowlands as well. The one thing that could have altered the situation, and cut off England from the Continent, would have been a fleet capable of holding the Channel.

When Caesar arrived in Gaul, he found a sea power already

in being that he must needs destroy before there could be any question of invading Britain. This power consisted of a confederation of Gaulish tribes scattered along the coast of France, and these, when the crisis came, were joined by an uncertain number of ships from Britain, the whole fleet mustering the formidable total of 220 sail. But they were no match for the trained seamanship and discipline of the Romans, who, with a much smaller fleet, succeeded in crippling the enemy by tearing down their sails, and then boarding the drifting hulks at their leisure. The first sea-fight in which British ships took part—it was not far from the mouth of the Loire—thus ended in an annihilating disaster which left the island naked to invasion.

But Caesar had undertaken a task too great for his resources. To conquer and hold Gaul, from the Atlantic to the Rhine line, was as much as even he was capable of accomplishing with the few legions under his command. Perhaps he only dreamed of a plundering or a punitive expedition, perhaps it was less calculation than sheer excess of energy that determined his action. Twice in successive years he forced a landing on Kentish soil, not without a good deal of difficulty in negotiating the Channel tides, and got more hard fighting and less loot than he had bargained for. Having saved his face by a Pyrrhic victory he returned for the second time to Gaul, which, by flaming out in a final attempt to shake off the Roman yoke, gave him enough to do for the remainder of his pro-consulship. After this, for nearly a century Rome left Britain alone, contenting herself with a tariff on her exports to Gaul.

It was only a respite. Britain suffered from the characteristic weakness of Celtic peoples in being hopelessly divided against herself among a number of local chieftains. One of these, Cunobelinus or Cymbeline, did indeed succeed in extending his sway from Colchester over the whole of Southern England, and he was enough of a diplomatist to keep on good terms with Rome, but his success only earned him the hatred of the other tribes, and as in the Ireland of Henry II's time, there was a dispossessed member of the Royal House ready to call in the common enemy on behalf of his claims. Thus, after the death of the one strong man that Britain could produce, Rome had her pretext for finishing the task of adding the fertile British lowlands to the Empire, that Caesar had begun, and his nephew, Augustus, been twice on the point of undertaking. The fourth Emperor, Claudius, not incompatibly with being a weakling and a bookworm, was a strong expansionist.

The task, once decided upon, was carried out with Roman

thoroughness. After the elimination of her Gaulish allies, Britain had been without the rudiments of naval defence. A landing was easily effected, and the lowlands of the South and East were quickly overrun by an ample and well equipped force, who passed on to deal with the more difficult country and wilder tribes beyond the Trent and Severn, leaving the new province to be organized behind them by the civil power. Eighteen years after the first landing, the corrupt tyranny of a local governor culminated in a filthy outrage on the daughters of a friendly chieftain and the flogging of his widow. This produced a terrible rebellion, in which the young and flourishing Roman colony was practically wiped out. Fortunately for Rome, after one legion had been destroyed, and the commander of another had lost his nerve and disobeyed orders to co-operate (he afterwards committed suicide), Suetonius Paulinus, who had been engaged in destroying the Druid headquarters in Anglesea, proved equal to the emergency and, hurrying back, demonstrated against enormous odds that the Celtic fire and fury in attack stood no chance against the rock-like discipline of Rome's veterans.

After this, saner methods of administration reconciled the lowland Britons to what they evidently considered a step forward in civilization, and the work of assimulation was crowned in the reign of Domitian by one of the most enlightened of all Roman administrators, Cnaeus Julius Agricola, who deliberately set himself to divert the people's minds from warlike activities by the amusements and arts of civilization, coupled with a little judicious flattery—the Britons had so much more natural talent than the Gauls! So that the Roman costume and way of life became as popular as Western customs to-day among a certain section of educated Indians. "This," remarks Agricola's biographer, Tacitus, not without contempt, "among an ignorant people was called civilization, while it was really an element of slavery."

The Roman Province

Before the Industrial Revolution, there was a natural line of division between more and less civilized Britain, which would have run from York to Exeter, with a slight bulge towards the Severn valley. To the South and East lay a land of gentle undulations, easily traversed except for the forests and the Eastern fens, a land that in Roman times formed a detached part of Gaul in the sense

that the Isle of Wight forms a detached part of England. To the North and West stretched a difficult and barren country, easy to defend, stubborn to hold or to civilize. Thus it is that tide after tide of invasion has flooded over one half of England, to spend its strength against the foothills of the other.

The Britain which Rome organized into a province, whose resources she exploited and on which she imposed her civilization, is the half of England to the South East of this dividing line. North of Isurium, which is a few miles beyond York, and west of the Severn, we find few villas or other evidences of peaceful occupation. The lowland territory was all that Rome had any reason to covet, and she would no doubt have left alone the fierce tribes of the outer lands, could she have had any guarantee that they would have kept within their own limits. But to hardy mountaineers, the attraction of fat and smiling plains, tenanted by an unwarlike population, has ever proved a temptation too great to be borne. So Rome had to deal with the wild Britons as well as the tame, and she set about the task with a measure of success which was not to be repeated for a thousand years after the breakdown of her system.

She had already absorbed the most civilized elements of the native population, and taken the heart out of the Druid faith by the massacre of its chiefs at Anglesea. The three legions of her garrison army made their headquarters at York, at Chester, and at Caerleon at the gate of South Wales. Wales itself, a thorn in the side of our medieval kings, was controlled by a system of roads and fortified posts, and no serious trouble was thenceforward threatened from the West. But in the North the hill country stretched on and on, and no forces that Rome had to spare would have sufficed to garrison it. Agricola himself penetrated as far as the Scottish Highlands, and fought one great battle at a place he called Mons Graupius, a tactical victory that gave him the ground he stood on, but not the means of maintaining an army so far from his base or of cornering the enemy in his fastnesses.

It was Hadrian, perhaps the ablest of the supremely able Antonine Caesars, who devised the system of defence by which the Empire could best be maintained until the final crash. He had the wit to see that every outward push into the void imposed a fresh strain on Rome's resources, and he decided to fix a final limit to her expansion. From henceforward, she is to dig herself in against the outer hordes of barbarism, and behind these lines, sustain a

gigantic siege. Her permanent garrison of legionaries and auxiliaries was to be strung out all round the frontier line which, where there was the possibility of attack, was marked by a continuous wall and entrenchment, strengthened at frequent intervals by fortified posts. Thus far and no further was Roman rule to extend; beyond the lines the barbarians were to be left to their own devices.

The necessity for some such scheme of defence in the North of Britain had been emphasized by a rising of the tribes that had annihilated the legion posted at York and compelled Hadrian to replace it by another. Accordingly the permanent line of defence was sited between the Tyne and the Solway, and a wall was built strong enough to defy the rush of any Caledonian or Pictish horde. In Northern England, thus effectually isolated from Scotland, Rome could proceed to carry out the same policy of policing the wild tribes as had already succeeded in Wales. Under Hadrian's successor, an ill-advised attempt was made to take in the Lowlands of Scotland, and construct a new wall along the shorter line between the Forth and the Clyde. But here Rome had allowed her reach to exceed her grasp. She was incapable of holding down the hill tribes North of the Tweed, or of securing her exposed flanking line of communications along the East coast. It was not long before the new wall had to be abandoned, and a futile and ruinously expensive attempt of the Emperor Septimius Severus to conquer or terrorize the country closed the chapter of Roman ambitions in Scotland.

Henceforth, we have to reckon with three kinds of Briton. Beyond Hadrian's wall were the untamed Caledonians, a name which afterwards gives place to that of the Picts, who seem to have been an offshoot of the Pictones or Poitevins in the West of France, and to have established themselves, Viking-like, in the Orkneys, and thence spread southwards. However this may be—and the origin of the Picts is a question on which every expert has his own theory—the fact remains that the Romans who manned the wall in the fourth century no longer talked of keeping out the Caledonians, but the Picts. Behind the wall were the disarmed but unromanized tribes to the North of York and West of the Severn, with Exeter as the outpost of Romanization in the South West. And behind this Celtic fringe lay that fragment of the Mediterranean Empire that the sea happened to have detached from its Gaulish mainland.

Of this peaceful and civilized province, even if we could pierce the darkness of time that envelopes it, there would be little to record, because its history is not that of Britain but of Rome. The Celtic

civilization had not the strength of the Greek and Egyptian, that enabled them to preserve some sort of emasculated individuality even after their absorption into the Empire. Speaking broadly, Lowland Britain became a province like any other province in the Empire, of which the towns at least had the same laws, the same amusements, the same beliefs, the same standards of art and living. There is no British style of architecture or decoration, nothing British about the tesselated mosaic pavements, or the pretty Samian ware pottery that was used even in the villages, or the images of the gods—Father Thames might just as easily have passed muster for Father Tiber or Father Nile, and if our British fields and springs had their deities, they were no more than the standardized products of the Mediterranean firm.

And yet as Haverfield, the supreme authority on Roman Britain, has pointed out, there is evidence that the Celtic tradition still persisted to some extent. It is notable that the two examples of sculpture he particularly cites, a lion from Corstopitum, by the Wall, and the terrific bearded Gorgon, from Bath, with their realistic and unrestrained vitality, both occur in places not far removed from the influences of the outer Celtic fringe. But these, with the evidences of a similar spirit in New Forest and Castor ware pottery, are but exceptions to the general rule of whole-hearted Romanization on the part of a people who desired nothing better than to be accounted good citizens or subjects of the Empire that to them was synonymous with civilization. Rome was not, as a rule, intolerant; ghosts of the old beliefs may well have walked among the rural population.

Being on the outer fringe of the Empire and so near the still active forces of kindred barbarism, it is doubtful whether the British province was ever quite so thoroughly and efficiently Romanized as Gaul, for instance, or Spain. Haverfield exactly hits it off when he remarks that Romano-British life was normal in quality but defective in quantity.

"We find towns," he says, "in Britain as elsewhere, and farms, and country houses. But the towns are small and somewhat few and the country houses indicate comfort more often than wealth. So too the costlier objects of ordinary use, fine mosaics, precious glass, gold and silver ornaments, occur comparatively seldom, and such as do occur, seem to be almost wholly imports." [1] And he compares Romano-British civilization to a man of sound, but not strong constitution, who might perish quickly from violent shock.

[1] *The Romanization of Roman Britain*, p. 27.

On the whole, we get the impression of a rather second-rate civilization, judged by Roman standards, in this not very important province. Perhaps the veneer of Romanization was apt to wear rather thinner in such close contact with the untamed forces of a kindred barbarism. At any rate, Britain is remarkable for the number of military pretenders to imperial honours who arose from among the frontier garrison—for it cannot be too emphatically stated that there was no idea of rebellion against the Empire itself.

None the less, credit must be given to the Romans for what, as workers and employers of labour, they achieved during the centuries of their rule. They brought to Britain traditions, already centuries old, of scientific farming and engineering. Their first care was to build up, in the most literal sense, a system of roads, superior to anything that survived their departure down to the end of the eighteenth century. For this, as we know from Tacitus, they conscripted the labour of the natives. Their roads were even more expressive than their buildings and statues of that invincible, unimaginative will-power that enabled the Roman, in the words of his greatest poet, to rule the nations with his sway. They did not, like the old trackways, allow their course to be dictated to them by the accident of the ground. They drove a bee-line, over hills and through forests and across marshes, raised, wherever necessary for gradient or drainage, on causeways.

Drainage was an art which the Roman had inherited from his Etruscan forbears, and which Virgil enjoins on farmers in the Georgics. The men who built the roads were not likely to tolerate swamps, and such works as the Car Dyke in Cambridgeshire are evidences of their prowess in this direction, though—possibly because they had enough fertile land for their needs—they left the fens of the East country to the wild-fowl and the greater forests to the wolf.

Perhaps the most impressive of all the monuments of Roman efficiency is the Pharos, or lighthouse, that stands, though in ruin, solidly octagonal on the cliffs of Dover, reminding us that even in these remote days the skipper kept his course through the Straits between the familiar lights of Dover and Grisnez.

From a business point of view, at least, Roman civilization can claim to have made good. In its palmy days Britain was able to export the products of her farms and mines and even of her looms on a considerable scale. The face of the countryside must have been transformed by the working of the more or less scientifically managed villa estates. But the life is more than meat, and the best that can

be said for the elegant and standardized mediocrity of most Romano-British remains that have come down to us is that it may at any rate be preferable to the positive hideousness and squalor of modern town life. But of such remains, those that make the most direct appeal to us are the few that preserve some lingering and rebellious traces of the old Celtic spirit.

5

Christianity and the Celtic Revival

The Mediterranean Empire, of which Britain was a part, was undergoing a gradual transformation in the third and fourth centuries, which was ultimately to have the effect of overwhelming the British province with barbarism, or of restoring Britain to herself —whichever way we like to put it. During the century that followed the golden age of the Antonines, the Empire wallowed in an orgy of corruption and civil strife, in which one puppet Emperor followed another, and only the extraordinary strength of the governmental machine, whose bureaucratic wheels ground on unaffected by the change of Emperors, and the tenacity of the Roman idea, kept the structure from collapsing. Then came a rally. The process of centralization was carried to its logical conclusion; the Divine Caesar became an oriental despot in a semi-oriental capital; every form of constitutional check on his supreme and centralized authority was swept away; and the centre of the Empire shifted Eastward to Constantinople, leaving Britain more remote than ever, and creating an inevitable tendency in the Western provinces to break loose from a power that was no longer essentially Mediterranean, but a half-way house and a barrier between East and West.

At the very moment they were making their sway formally absolute, the Cæsars were forced to compromise it by alliance with a power, an *imperium in imperio*, that might easily prove a formidable rival. This power was the Christian Church, which, starting as an obscure sect at Jerusalem, and with the impetus behind it of the unique personalities of its Founder, Jesus, and its missionary organizer, Paul, became a vast and disciplined organization, with its ramifications all over the Empire, and in which the fitful persecutions of the reasonably alarmed government only seemed to awaken a more invincible devotion. Having failed to destroy this Church, the Caesars attempted to deal with it in the only other way possible, by capturing it and putting themselves at its head, assimilating

it to the rest of the State machinery. This was well enough as a temporary, and perhaps as a permanent expedient, so far as the Eastern part of the Empire was concerned, but in the West it was possible that the Church might one day find an empty throne which God would command her to fill.

Of how Christianity came to Britain we know little for certain. We have the legend which may well be founded on fact, of the proto-martyr, the soldier Alban, and we know that as early as 314, three British bishops left their sees to attend the Council of Arles. But British Christianity has left few traces, and the solitary church the foundations of which have come to light at Silchester, is such a poky affair that it makes one doubt whether, in that flourishing centre, the average congregation could have equalled that of the smallest country hamlet nowadays. On the other hand, we have the evidence of "old Christian Wales" to prove that the Faith must have taken firm hold upon British people some time before the severance of the Roman connection.

The golden age of Roman rule in Britain is the period between the final establishment of the Northern defences at Hadrian's Wall and the first forcing of the defences by the Northern enemy, in other words, roughly the third and the first half of the fourth centuries. Even then it must have been apparent to any far-sighted observer that Rome held her British province on a precarious tenure and that dangers were gathering that she might hold at arm's length, but was powerless to remove. There was the Northern Hinterland against which the great Agricola and Severus had spent themselves in vain. There was Ireland, whose continued liberty had been, in Agricola's opinion, a bad example to the Britons, and which he believed he could have conquered with one legion and a few auxiliaries. And finally there were the pirates of the North Sea.

Now Rome, though with a great deal of difficulty, had managed to make the Mediterranean a fairly safe highway for commerce; but effectively to police the outer seas was a task in which she never succeeded, either to the North or the South East. The North Sea was not only a happy hunting ground for the Picts, but also for the Nordic tribes along the coasts of Frisia and Denmark, who were at first lumped together under the name of Saxons. Rome was unable to deal with these pests, as she had done in the Mediterranean, by the simple method of occupying their coast line. The next best thing to do was to maintain a fleet powerful enough to command the seas against them. This fleet was based upon Boulogne, for

it must be remembered that the Gaulish coast suffered even more severely than that of Britain from continual harrying. Unfortunately in the troubled times towards the end of the third century, the admiral of this fleet, a former Belgian pilot called Carausius, was suspected of being in the pirates' pay. Knowing what fate was in store for him, he boldly, and with the backing of his fellow sailors, proclaimed himself master of a not unwilling Britain, and maintained himself there by his command of the sea. He was, of course, setting up to be Emperor not of Britain, but in Britain. Carausius was soon murdered—the lives of imperial candidates in the third century would have broken the back of any insurance company—and the idea of commanding the seas was allowed to drop. Rome made the coasts of Britain her frontiers, and fell back upon a system of coast defences under an officer called " The Count of the Saxon Shore ".

In the seventh decade of the fourth century a terrible disaster fell upon Roman Britain. The whole of her enemies, Northerners, Irish and Saxons, seem to have banded together, and in 367, after several years' fighting, the Wall was stormed or, more likely, turned from the sea and taken in reverse. The Count of the Saxon Shore and the Commander-in-Chief in the North were both killed, the legions melted away, and down came the Barbarians, flooding into the peaceful province, harrying and looting the prosperous villas, and penetrating so far that when at last the Count Theodosius arrived with reinforcements strong enough to clear the country of the invaders, he had to fight his way from Richborough up to London.

This catastrophe, though the evidence is very scanty, cannot but have dealt a deadly wound to the civilization of the British province. A peaceful country cannot be overrun from end to end, and quietly pick up the threads of its old life. Despite the brief respite obtained by Theodosius, the barbarians were soon again thundering at the gates, at the very time when the dry rot within, more than any pressure from without, was destroying the grand old fabric of Roman power in the West. Out of the darkness that is gathering over Britain, we catch glimpses of a military organization going to pieces, of usurpers taking the cream of the forces to follow them on adventures abroad, of mutiny at time of darkest crisis, all the symptoms of a power that has ceased to be true to itself. And yet the Roman organization died hard, much harder, in fact, than anybody had imagined until Professor Bury discovered that at least as late as 428 the connection with Rome was being maintained,

and the normal machinery of government was still functioning in the province. It must have been very soon afterwards that the final separation occurred, and Britain was left to defend herself as best she might.

We are much in the dark as to what was happening in Britain during the years that intervened between the great combined invasion of 367, and the first permanent settlement of the North Sea rovers about the middle of the next century. But judging, with all diffidence, from such fragments of evidence as we possess, we can hardly doubt that the tide of Celtic influence had begun to flow back into the Lowlands with the weakening of the Roman power. It must be remembered that Rome had never attempted to do more than police the hill country to the North and West, though she had weakened and emasculated the native civilization by imposing her own on the richest and most advanced tribes and rooting out the Druid religion. But when the power and prestige of Rome were visibly on the wane, it was only to be expected that Celtic civilization should take on a new lease of life, even in the Romanized lowlands.

Towards the end of the fourth century the Celts of Ireland began to leave their shores in considerable numbers and plant settlements on the British coast, particularly in Wales and Scotland. Professor Oman has plausibly conjectured, from the apparent absence of Roman troops on the Welsh border and their concentration in the North, that Rome had already decided to leave the Welsh to work out their own salvation, and it seems that a powerful British chieftain, called Cunedda, came from the North into Wales and rallied the tribes to a successful counter-offensive against the Irish.

The Celtic revival, if we must use the term, was by no means a reversion to the state of things that had existed before the conquest. While the Roman State was getting weaker and weaker, the Christian Church was establishing and confirming its hold upon the people. In the night of desolation that was darkening over the land, men's eyes naturally turned towards the Cross, no longer of the sun-god, but of the Man of Sorrows. In such times, the heart demands some surer anchorage than that afforded by a moribund paganism, but at the beginning of the fifth century we find what we may well imagine to have been a peculiarly Celtic development, in the form of the Pelagian heresy, in other words, an uncompromising assertion of the freedom of the will. A man's salvation, according to this doctrine, was in his own hands rather than those of the Church.

Such a tendency to react against the centralized discipline of Rome was for centuries characteristic of the hot-blooded and unruly Celt.

Despite the waning of Roman civilization, the Christian Britons of the Celtic revival managed to put up a surprisingly long and good fight against the hordes of invaders. The direct threat from Ireland seems to have been countered by the strong hand of Cunedda, and for the first half of the fifth century the most pressing danger was from the North, where the Picts had been reinforced by Irish immigrants into South-Western Scotland. Against these enemies the Christians put up a gallant defence. We have the record of one striking victory under the leadership of Germanus, the missionary bishop from Gaul who had come over to bring back the Pelagian heretics to the orthodox fold. It is said that he succeeded in throwing the enemy into a panic by a cunningly devised ambush, causing his men, at a pre-arranged signal, to leap up on all sides with a mighty Hallelujah!

We have, at any rate, no traces of such a disaster as had occurred on the bursting of the Northern defences at the full height of the Roman power, and the Britons seem even to have improved their position, if we may judge by the fact that in the middle of the century Saint Patrick found a strong British King or chieftain, called Coroticus (Caradoc or Cerdic), established beyond the Wall in Galloway. But we should be mistaken if we thought in modern terms of an organized national resistance to an equally organized invasion. What did occur was probably something far more confused. Even before the shadow of Roman authority was withdrawn, it is probable that the Celtic tendency to split up into disconnected tribal units was beginning to re-assert itself, at any rate in the North and West. To a Caradoc or Cunedda, the Christian chief of the next district may well have seemed as natural an enemy as the heathen Pict or Scot.

6

The Coming of the English

The Western and Northern invaders were thus held at arm's length. But the third enemy from across the North Sea, who had not to break through the resistance of the unromanized hillmen, was at last equal to the invasion of those lowlands that the Romans had tamed, but which they had ceased to defend. What turned the pirates into invaders and settlers we cannot know for certain, but we may conjecture that it was not unconnected with the Westward

advance of the Baltic coast-dwellers called the Angles, who appear to have mastered the original Saxon pirates early in the fifth century. But the first move in the invasion was taken by the Jutes, who dwelt in the Jutland Peninsula to the North of the Anglo-Saxons, and it was quite conceivably part of a pre-arranged scheme of conquest between the two peoples. The Britons, like their ancestors of the first century, had no fleet to challenge the command of the seas, and since the pressure from the North seems to have driven them to the time-honoured Roman expedient of using barbarians to fight barbarians, it was perhaps by British permission that the Jutes were able to make the safe and correct preliminary to invasion by establishing their advanced base off the Kentish coast on the Isle of Thanet. The traditional date is 449, but we may possibly place it a few years earlier.

This was the beginning of the end for whatever was left of Romanization in Britain. The invaders, having command of the sea and a secure base, could choose their own time and place for each successive blow, and could draw reinforcements from their fellow tribesmen and any fighting bands who could be enlisted in the ventures. It is highly probable that there was some concerted scheme of operations, but from the fragmentary and late records we can only guess at the course of the invasion. It seems to have followed the usual course of overwhelming the lowlands and being checked at the foothills. The Britons put up a desperate resistance, and at first found a leader in Ambrosius Aurelianus, "a modest man, who alone, as it happened, of the Roman nation had survived the storm." As the fighting swayed backwards and forwards, the remains of Roman civilization gradually disappeared; even Bath, in the West, was a deserted ruin, the haunt of wild fowl, long before it was finally captured in 577. By the beginning of the sixth century the contest was between the heathen conquerors of the lowlands and the Christian Celts of the North and West.

Then occurs a surprising reversal of fortune. The British tribes rally under a leader whose name, Arthur, is Roman, and whose title would be probably more accurately "general" than "king". So much legend has grown up around this heroic figure, that Arthur's very existence has been disputed by the same sort of reasoning that reduces Christ to a myth, Homer to a co-operative society, and Shakespeare to the bold illiterate who feared not to be saddled with the guilt of Lord Bacon's plays. Without entering into a rather futile controversy, we may content ourselves with stating

that the Celtic tribes did unite in a supreme effort, presumably under a leader, and among other successes ("Nennius" reports twelve battles, one of them at the "Town of Legions", either York or Chester), gained such a smashing victory at a place called Mons Badonicus, that Saint Gildas, in 546, who is here recording events in his own life time, tells us that the land had peace for forty years.

It was only a respite. The medieval story that Cador, Duke of Cornwall, took up the pursuit after Mons Badonicus, and drove the heathen back to Thanet, where they surrendered, is a romantic exaggeration. The hold of the invaders on the lowlands was too strong, and Arthur, unlike Alfred, did not find a successor to carry his work to completion, but rather, if we may trust the legend, a traitor to ruin it. How far the heathen were pushed back we may judge from the fact that, according to the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, Aylesbury and Bedford were only taken or re-taken by them in 571, more than 120 years after the first landing. By this time they were strong enough to resume their advance, and found a leader in Ceawlin, of Wessex, the second to bear the title of Bretwalda, meaning wielder, or perhaps we should say generalissimo, of English Britain. Mons Badonicus was avenged, in 577, by a victory at the ancient earthwork of Deoram, or Dyrham, a few miles north of Bath, which cut off the Britons of Wales from those of the South West, and gave Ceawlin possession at least of the sites of Bath, Cirencester and Gloucester. Thirty years later Wales was cut off also from the Britons of the North by a victory of the Northumbrian King Ethelfrith at Chester. The Christians were now not only driven back into the hills, but were split into three parts having no land communication with each other.

A word of caution is necessary. In any summary account, it is hard not to convey the impression of too great simplicity. But if we had any accurate contemporary record, we should probably find that the struggle of Celt and Anglo-Saxon was complicated by so many vicissitudes and cross-currents that even a contemporary observer could have had no very clear idea of what was happening. That the pirate chiefs, though they might be united now and then under some commanding personality, always hung together is not to be believed. In 663, only twenty-six years after the Battle of Chester, we find a Christian King of North Wales forming an alliance with that staunch old pagan, Penda of Mercia, to make an end of the Christian King of Northumbria, and the Welshman was even more "hunnish" in his methods of war than his ally.

It is hardly likely that this was the only, or the first time, that among so many fierce and independent chieftains, race and religion had been set at nought in the feuds that must have been perpetually arising between neighbours. We have the curious and hitherto unexplained circumstance of one of the pirate fathers, the first king of Wessex and the ancestor of our own Royal House, bearing the Celtic name of Cerdic (Caradoc or Coroticus), which is identical with that of his younger contemporary, the British Ruler of Galloway. And even if we get round this difficulty by ruling out Cerdic's existence, we have yet to account for a Caedwalla and a Mul among his descendants. Perhaps there was as much of sheer anarchy as of racial or religious feeling in the struggles of this time—tribe against tribe, band against band, chieftain against chieftain, with only occasional combinations on a grand scale of Christians under an Arthur or heathens under a Bretwalda.

What was the fate of the Britons in the conquered districts? A little time ago it was the fashion for expert historians to talk as if the invaders had set about exterminating them with a thoroughness that not even a Timour or Joshua could have rivalled. Such vulgar motives as that of getting other people to work for them were not to be attributed to these austere champions of pure Teutonism. It was only when events brought Teutonism out of fashion, that this cheerful theory, so wildly improbable in itself, was seen to rest on not a particle of evidence. The tendency lately has been to go to the other extreme, as if to maintain the historical continuity of Romano-British life were in some way to do one's bit against the Boche, or perhaps to curtail one's time in Purgatory. But to the dispassionate enquirer—and they have been curiously few—it must be evident that both exterminators and continuators are simplifying facts beyond all reason and probability.

The idea of a persistent and merciless slaughter of the whole of the native population who could not get away into the hills is a product of academic sadism of which a savage would be ashamed. The slightest knowledge of human, let alone of Anglo-Saxon nature, would reveal its absurdity. Our ancestors were neither fiends nor brutes. When they emerge, 150 years after the first landing, into the light of history, they are no doubt hard and rough fighters, but more inclined to a lazy good-nature than a deliberate cruelty. Their epic hero, Beowulf, like the Kings who first received Christianity, was a gentleman, and the great champion of heathenism, the Mercian Penda, was not only a cleaner fighter

than his Christian ally, Caedwalla, but tolerated the missionaries in whom he did not believe, and admired them for sticking up for their principles. In the whole of Anglo-Saxon history, though we find instances of violence and revenge in plenty, there is nothing that indicates a cold blooded implacability such as that which found satisfaction in the amphitheatre or auto-da-fé. The Anglo-Saxons, unless we believe them to have reversed their nature in half-a-dozen generations, are the last people whom we should cast for the part of universal butchers.

Nor is there a shred of evidence for such a supposition. Even the monk, Gildas, writing of the horrors of the invasion in the true propagandist spirit, allows that the heathen took slaves. The Anglo-Saxons were a practical folk, eminently alive to the main chance, and they were no more likely to waste valuable labour than they were to throw money into the sea. The evidence of place-names is also conclusive for survival.[1] With only a few exceptions, the important towns of the Roman province survive under their original names, and what is even more remarkable, the petty kingdoms or tribal districts of the conquerors have not Teutonic but British names, such as, for instance, Deira, Bernicia, Elmet and Craven. Most of the rivers and a great many of the hills keep their Celtic names, and though nearly all the villages are called after their Teutonic settlers, the survival of British or Welsh communities is recorded by such names as Walcot and Walton,[2] and still more strikingly, by the Norse Bretby, Birkby, and Brettgate, which prove that such British communities retained their identity even after the Danish invasion.

The evidence of the agricultural system is more open to dispute, but a case has at least been made out for seeking the origin of the English manor in the Roman villa. And even in the more prosaic Eastern districts, one can plausibly cite survivals of local custom and folk-lore that survived Saxon and Roman alike.

But to show the absurdity of the extermination theory, there is no need to rush to the opposite extreme, and talk as if the invasion had amounted to nothing more than the settlement of a few pirates on the coast and up the rivers, with no very great breach in the continuity of British life. That the invasion was a terrible and devastating calamity is established by every particle of evidence,

[1] This is excellently stated by Messrs. Stenton and Mawer, in *An Introduction to the Survey of English Place Names.*

[2] Though even this is not undisputed by certain philologists.

direct and circumstantial. The monk, Gildas, the Jeremiah of Celtic Briton, may have been piling on the agony in his account of cities sacked and desolate, of " the miserable remnant " of the people, hunted and starving, giving themselves up into slavery or fleeing overseas, but he was evidently writing of events that had burned themselves deep into the British soul, and it is known that there was a great emigration of Britons into that North Western province of France that took the name of Brittany. The Angles, fresh from the Baltic shore, would be the least likely of all Teutonic peoples to respect the civilization bequeathed by Rome, and the invaders had then, and for long afterwards, a thorough distaste for city life. A prolonged and desperate struggle with a folk they probably despised as effeminate, and whose way of life was repellent to them, was not likely to have been conducted with kid gloves.

The religion of the natives can at best only have survived in a few holes and corners of the conquered districts, the language was superseded, save for a few words likely to have been useful to slaves, the arts of Roman Britain perished utterly, even in the matter of personal adornment where female influence might have been expected to have preserved a certain continuity. To judge from the scales of Weregilds or Blood Money in the code of the Wessex King, Ini, the Briton was as much the inferior of the Englishman as the Englishman, in his turn, was to be of the Norman. He could, in fact, be killed at about half-price. Even if there were nothing else to go by, the difference in temperament and human atmosphere between the conquered territory and its Celtic fringe, would be enough to show that the Anglo-Saxons did succeed in setting the stamp of their personality and tradition upon the subsequent course of our history. Only prejudice can be blind to the distinctively Anglo-Saxon character of pre-conquest England, or imagine a Welsh Alfred and an English Taliesin.

The first effect of the invasion was to sever communication between England and the Continent. The horror of a great darkness descended upon the land, so completely cut off was it from what survived of European civilization that it was believed to be, literally, an island of the dead. Every night—so the story ran—a fleet put off from the coast of Gaul, weighed down with an invisible complement of passengers, whose names were called out loud, the obituary list of the preceding day. And when they had touched the shores of Britain, the ships rose out of the water, as the weird emigrants disembarked into the Unknown.

CHAPTER II

ANGLO-SAXON CIVILIZATION

1

The Anglo-Saxons

The old inhabitants of England, waging a bitter but losing struggle against successive bands of invaders, naturally regarded their dispossessors with no more sympathy than a fugitive from Louvain might have been expected to entertain for a Pomeranian grenadier. Even their Church made no effort to spread the gospel of Christ among the invaders, but held sullenly and absolutely aloof.

We, however, who have less excuse for prejudice, need not hesitate to admit that the term barbarian is misleading as applied to those Nordic tribes who, after centuries of war, burst the frontiers of the Roman Empire. Children they may have been, compared with the more fortunate among the subjects of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, but they had their own ideals of honour, of courtesy and of government, which made no less an exponent of Roman culture than the historian Tacitus hold them up as an example for his degenerate fellow-citizens. It is owing to this very fact that certain modern critics, taking the hint from Rousseau, have been inclined to throw doubt upon the candour of that little masterpiece of his, the *Germania*. That Tacitus was biased in favour of his Germans no less than Macaulay and Froude in favour of their Whigs and Elizabethans is probable enough, but that he was a competent and scholarly investigator, telling the truth to the best of his ability, should be sufficiently evident to anybody who reads him. He is perfectly frank in painting the dark as well as the bright side of his picture; laziness, gambling and drunkenness are qualities he attributes to the tribes. Besides, if he had merely wanted to write a political squib, he would hardly have wasted so large a portion of his treatise in so painstaking a description of the different Nordic peoples.

Tacitus, who had ample sources of information from soldiers and civilians along the frontier, gives a not unpleasing impression of the future Empire-breakers. He shows us a folk courageous, with a high sense of honour, a rough idea of liberty and a still rougher kindness to slaves, men mindful of respect to their women-folk, who, in turn, guarded jealously their own and their husbands' honour. But this treatise of Tacitus was as far separated in time from the age of the Saxon invasions as is our own age from that of Queen Bess, nor have we certain knowledge that any of the tribes of which he treats were the ancestors of our invaders.

His witness is, however, roughly substantiated by the state of society revealed in the first English writings of which we have any record, as well as from such indirect evidence as we may glean from the remains of old English art. The most important historical document of the Heptarchy is the *Beowulf*, an English epic, dealing with Danish and Scandinavian events, its heathen substratum being faintly and superficially touched by monkish Christianity. That an old English epic should be concerned in no way with England is highly characteristic, for early Anglo-Saxon civilization takes thought not of the country nor any abstract idea of the State, but of the man himself and his kindred, real or fictitious. Cerdic or Ini is not the King of Wessex, but the "cuning" or "tribe man" of the West Saxons.

This is where the so-called barbarian differed most essentially from the Roman, nor is the difference a merely transient one between civilized men and savages. It subsists to-day, it is what most distinguishes the modern Anglo Saxon from the modern Latin, it is at the root of the opposition between the world's two main legal systems. England starts from the man, Rome starts from the State; the Frenchman may deify *La Rèpublique*, but the Englishman is going to have his rights, not the rights of man, but those of Smith, Brown and Robinson. His ideal of good government is sufficiently personal to-day, it was almost wholly personal in the time of Beowulf.

Many nations have their Beowulf, their helper of men who goes about quelling the monstrous enemies of mankind, and is invested with a power so mysterious and formidable as to impress simple men with the notion of something demonic. Greece had her Hercules, though, to the Greek, Hercules never seemed to have the epic attractiveness of an Achilles or an Odysseus—even in his statues he is something a little heavy, half hero, half brute. The Indian Rama stands at the other end of the scale, he is so highly-spiritualized, so much the incarnation of the divine Vishnu, that we find it hard to think

of him as a man at all. But Beowulf is at once magnificently a hero, and wholly human. True to the personal standards of his folk, he is of noble blood, and a redoubtable warrior. He has no other object in life than to perform noble deeds nobly. These ancestors of ours had hardly yet begun to conceive of thought, except as an immediate stimulus to action. Of such heroes as the subtle Odysseus and the spiritual chiefs of Indian legend they had neither the conception nor the desire. As was Julian Grenfell, so was Beowulf, the fighting man who took life from the sun and warmth from the earth, and whose supreme happiness was in the burning moment when

> "Only joy of battle grips
> Him by the throat and makes him blind."

As in every society where personality, and therefore status, plays a large part, there is a high standard of courtesy. Beowulf is an atheling, a gentleman, and wherever he goes expects and receives the same respectful urbanity from his equals as, in Velasquez's masterpiece of the taking of Breda, we see the Marquis of Spinola display towards the defeated Prince Maurice. King Hrothgar's reception of him is a model of kingly delicacy; Beowulf, who is no amateur in the trade of killing monsters, makes no stipulation about reward; the business side of the transaction is perfectly understood between the two, but gentlemen avoid overt discussion of such matters. Waltheow the Queen, skilful in courtesies, is as tactful and gracious a hostess as adorns any modern country house.

As might be expected from this, the most important quality of all in the eyes of our ancestors was that of personal loyalty. Such a chieftain as Beowulf would go about accompanied by a band of chosen companions, whose highest ideal was to live and die for their lord. "Such should a man be," says the poet about the faithful Wiglaf, "a thegn at need," But for the man who fails his lord in battle there is not only scorn and loathing, but he even loses his rights as a free man. Not only he, but his very kindred become tainted by his unfaith, he wanders forth deprived of land-right, an outlaw. To the old English mind the tenure of property was thus largely dependent on the worthiness of the person. Beowulf merely confirms what Tacitus has said, that it is lifelong shame and degradation for the companions to fall short of the valour of their chief.

The relations between the chief and his followers are of the tenderest. Beowulf takes his companions into his confidence, tells them, before encountering his last and fatal dragon, how much

he should have liked to encounter him unarmed, as he has fought Grendel, and why he does not do so. There survives a short poem of almost intolerable pathos, the lament of a poor old seafaring wanderer, recalling the days when he sat with his lost friends in the mead-hall, and thinking of the feast his dear, dead lord, his gold-giver, once made for him. Even so the companions of Beowulf mourn their lord's fall, and say that he was the mildest and kindest of men, most gracious to his folk, and most wishful for praise.

An intensely earnest people were these Anglo-Saxons, of an earnestness tinged with a profound melancholy. It is said that on the landing of our Expeditionary Force, what struck the French most about our troops was the melancholy of their songs. It is what might equally have struck a Romanized Briton, had he been in a position for dispassionate judgment on his invaders. What served them principally for religion was a sense of overshadowing fate, the Wyrd, blind and pitiless, that lays low strength and youth together, and ever leads sorrow upon the heels of joy. There is a sad, stoical poem by an old minstrel called Deor, who has been supplanted by a rival, and sits, broken-hearted, with his head bowed over the strings, revolving in his mind the stories of old heroes and heroines, whom fate has oppressed with sorrow and shameful wrongs :

" Yet these strove on and overcame, nor shall my strength be less." [1]

It was perhaps this seriousness of temperament that made the Anglo-Saxons so intensely practical. Their literature is one of the most matter-of-fact ever known ; its charm is its downright sincerity, not any flights of fancy or graceful dreams such as we meet with in Celtic literature. Beowulf himself has the commercial instinct ; he is no amateur warrior, and even when he is dying he asks to be carried to where he can see the dragon's glittering hoard, which he has conquered for his own people. A delight in honest and beautiful craftsmanship is testified by relics that have survived to our days. Weland, the first and greatest of smiths, is among the heroes. A helmet, adorned with gold and circled round with curious bands " just as the weapon smith had wrought it ", a sword with the semblance of a boar on the hilt and, like Excalibur and Durendal, with its own name, are among the equipment of Beowulf. Our ancestors were no strangers to the dignity of sound work well done.

They have bequeathed to their posterity a priceless heritage in their love of the sea and of seafaring. Herein they differed from

[1] Charlton M. Lewis's translation.

the Greeks, to whom, as in the Odyssey, the sea was a painful necessity, and from the Romans who, against their natural bent, improvised a fleet for beating the Carthaginians. Over the Anglo Saxons the sea exercised a positive fascination. We have the song of an old sailor, describing in moving terms the hardships and loneliness of a voyage, and yet confessing, half regretfully, that he is unable to resist the spell. The very cuckoo's song calls him forth. This is a love that has suffered many vicissitudes of faintness, but which burned as pure and intense at Scapa Flow in the twentieth century as off the Isle of Thanet in the fifth. Travel and the lure of foreign countries were as attractive to the Anglo Saxon as to the Dane, his first conqueror. There is a strange old ballad, supposed to be recited by one Widsith, a wandering gleeman, who might be supposed to be the direct ancestor of that music-hall hero who proclaims :—

" I've travelled everywhere, nowhere and anywhere."

He has, by his own account, been with the Greeks, the Finns, the Israelites, the Hebrews, the Scots, the Rugs, the Gloms, the Rumwealhs, and scores of others, including Alexander and Caesar, and he is careful to record how the very best people have always been the most liberal in rewarding minstrels, and how many a stately man, who well knew what was right, declared that he had never heard a happier song than that of Widsith, He concludes by admonishing those who wish for a settled glory underneath the stars to get on the right side of the minstrels.

Widsith affords us another instance of the extremely businesslike instincts of the primitive Englishman. A shrewd observer might have predicted that this would be no folk to despise trade, as the Greeks did. The " nation of shopkeepers " was already in embryo, melancholy, practical men, kindly and courteous by nature, independent, and yet with a deeprooted respect for persons and loyalty to the right kind of master. Such an ideal observer might have forboded that the besetting weakness of this people would proceed from the same source as its strength, from that essential matter-of-factness the obverse side of which is a sluggishness rather than a lack of imagination. If we hold that a Vere de Vere landed at Pevensey with the Conqueror, we must not forget that a still more distinguished passenger stepped from the beaked galley of Hengist. His name was John Bull.

2

Political Origins

We know little about the fortunes of the invaders for the first century and a half after the seizure of Thanet. The limitations of sea transport must have made their bands small in comparison with the immense hordes of Huns and Goths on the Continent. However they may have been co-ordinated for the common purpose of invasion, such bands must each have gathered, in the first place, under the auspices of some distinguished or high-born adventurer, of whom Beowulf is the idealized type. Such a man would constitute himself the promoter of a rather speculative undertaking. No doubt the matter would, in the most literal sense, be "mooted", in one of the moots or tribal assemblies of which Tacitus has given us an account. Our would-be hero would unfold his prospectus with such eloquence as he could command; he would speak of new homes, rich with corn and pasture, to be had for the taking, of effeminate natives, of loot galore, and perhaps throw in a little sentiment about the tribal honour and the gods. If the scheme or the proposer did not happen to please, murmurs of dissent would arise on all sides, but if the folk approved, they would clap their spears on their shields and a sufficiency of volunteers would be forthcoming.

Unlike the modern recruit, these warriors, or the greater part of them, would not have joined up as individuals. This was no mere plundering expedition, like the old time piracy, but a project of settlement. Not only the warriors, but women, grey-beards, children and portable wealth had somehow to be got on shipboard and transferred to the promised land. And thus the recruiting unit would not have been the man, but rather the family or the enlarged family that went by the name of the "maegth" or kin, folk who naturally stood together and dwelt together both in their old and new lands, Billings or Birmings or one of those numberless other "ings" whose names are borne to this day by the village homes or "hams" in which they established themselves. No doubt, the first successes, the advantages of the newly-won homes, would lose nothing in the telling in Schleswig or Jutland, and just as happens with a successful company, those who had hesitated before would now be tumbling over each other for a share in the business, so that, as Bede tells us, the country of the Angles was at last quite depopulated. Very

probably other adventurers were drawn in from the neighbouring lands, as happened when William the Conqueror got together his host for the invasion of England.

A tremendous task of organization must have been imposed both on the supreme and the subordinate leaders of the invasion. It was not only a question of dealing with a well-armed, numerous and formidable enemy, who had, up till recently, held his own against all comers, but of keeping body and soul together in a strange land. What one is apt to forget, even in talking of modern wars, is that everyone, combatant or non-combatant, carries about a belly that daily demands to be refilled. Throughout the Middle Ages the business of getting through a winter on salted meat and stored grain was arduous enough even in time of peace, and therefore, even if the ships came over in the spring, it was necessary not only to beat the enemy, but to improvise some scheme of settlement and social economy before the fall of the leaf. Looked at from this standpoint it seems doubly incredible that such eminently business-like prospectors should wantonly have " off-slain ", as they would have called it, the men who could have reaped the harvests and looked after such beasts as had not been driven away.

Now we reach one of the most vigorously disputed territories in the whole realm of history. What were the relations of the invaders to the conquered people or to their own lords ? Did they borrow or introduce their agricultural system ? Are we to think of them as free or semi-feudalized communities ? How did the manor originate, and representative government ? It is exceedingly improbable that such questions will ever be finally decided, partly owing to the insufficiency of evidence, partly because the questions themselves are incapable of any simple answer. It is natural to look for a system even where there was in all probability no system at all, but innumerable expedients varying from time to time and place to place and only gradually evolving something coherent. We know that the different family groups were settled in more or less self-contained agricultural units, each with its group of dwellings, its fields of arable land portioned in strips, its " waste " for pasturage, probably its smithy and its mills. These units would have been grouped in " hundreds ",[1] either of " hides " of land, or more probably, of families, at first, one conjectures, for mutual support against the

[1] Though direct evidence for the existence of English hundreds does not occur till, roughly, 500 years after the first landing. There are, however, Roman and Teutonic analogies.

natives, later for administrative and judicial purposes. And above all these came the independent chieftainships, or kingships, many more at first than the traditional seven, over which the promoters-in-chief of the invasion and their successors maintained such sovereignty as they could by the help of their personal or family prestige, the need for military combination, and the loyalty of the personal followers that constituted their bodyguard or household.

This, or any other simple generalization, can, however, only convey an imperfect impression of the rough and ready arrangements that were probably improvised in practice. We suspect that a good deal of the difficulty in interpreting Anglo Saxon conditions arises from the fact that scholars, with their logical and systematic minds, are incapable of getting to the level of so illogical a folk as the Anglo Saxons. The countrymen of Bede and Alfred were no doubt capable of rising to heights of genius unsurpassed by any contemporary people, but the slowness of their mental processes was constantly apt to degenerate into the slovenliness that made the alert and incisive Norman despise them as a race of boors, and which we can easily see by contrasting the clean-cut efficiency of Norman architecture with a certain uncouthness that mars even the best Saxon construction.

The idea that the Anglo Saxons brought with them, from their Teutonic homeland, a full-blown system of democratic government by assemblies of free men, is one that originated partly in the admiration for everything German that obtained under Victorian auspices, and partly in the habit of thinking in terms of laws and systems rather than of the spirit by which they are inspired. To talk of the constitutional system of Heptarchic Kent or Northumbria would be to use language that would have been unintelligible to a subject of Ethelbert or Ethelfrith. But certain mental habits were already implanted that would form, as it were, the soil out of which a constitution could grow.

From the first, the Anglo Saxon had no idea of passive submission to authority. Loyalty he could understand and practice, but it must be freely given and for adequate reasons. There was little mystical in his temperament, and religion sat upon him but lightly. In consequence his kings, even when they could claim descent from Woden, were hedged about with none of that mysterious divinity which is the King's chief asset in most primitive societies. In the first codes of law, or statements of custom, a king's life is priced in the tariff at the head of the list: killing him is in no sense treason,

but merely the most expensive of all kinds of manslaughter. A king's life, as we may gather from the records of the time, was held on a precarious tenure. Like the gods themselves, he was expected to make good, to justify his existence or to end it.

To seek for constitutional or democratic institutions in the records of Heptarchic England is to anticipate centuries of mental development. What we do find is something more intangible, but in its essence simple. The Anglo Saxons were a people with a natural instinct for combination but a chronic impatience of dictation. They were not, like oriental peoples and the Romans of the later Empire, content to resign all their wills to that of the person, or persons, to whom they entrusted the business of government. The trend of our history, both in Anglo Saxon times and for centuries after, has been in flat contradiction of the Roman and Renaissance doctrine of absolute sovereignty. The difficulty of the ruler was not to think out the best line of policy in the abstract, but to hit upon one likely to chime in sufficiently with the inclinations of his subjects, or the most powerful of them, to be put into practice. The king or chief, Tacitus tells us of his Teutons, speaks at the assemblies "rather with influence to persuade than power to command".

This was not a constitutional problem in the modern sense. What was practicable or even safe to decide would depend largely on the circumstances of the moment, and still more on the personality of the ruler. But from the very nature of the case, it would be necessary, before deciding upon anything important, to get together the people who mattered and in some way to ascertain what they wanted. Even as early as the time of Tacitus, the Nordic tribes were in the habit of assembling themselves together, though no doubt the historian, with the natural bias of a Roman, exaggerates the formality of the proceedings, when he talks of a committee of chiefs who deal with minor business and refer important matters to the whole body. One of the hundreds of Middlesex is called after the Spelthorne or Speech Thorn, no doubt the sacred tree from whose shade a Hengist or an Aella would hold forth to his thegns on the eve of an expedition.

In these "things" or "moots" would be determined the first primitive elements of law. This law was the practical expression of the commonsense of the community. We have no evidence of its being hedged about with any religious sanctions before the coming of Christianity, except that lucky days and sacred places

(like the Spell Thorn) would be chosen for the assemblies, and that, according to Tacitus, order was kept by the priests. This law had none of the scope or science of Roman law, but was, in fact, a rough-and-ready, but thoroughly businesslike way, of stopping blood-feuds between the different families or "maegths". We know how in the Highlands of Scotland, up to the eighteenth century, and among the frontier tribes of India to-day, murderous vendettas between family and family, clan and clan, would be waged for generations, and that once a crime had been committed, a regular interchange of vengeance would go on which nothing, short of the day of judgment or foreign conquest, could bring to a stop. To the practical minds of our ancestors, this state of things constituted an intolerable nuisance, and some means had to be found of stopping vendettas. On occasion the assembly, to which the matter was referred, might decree some settlement of its own devising, as when Gunnar, in the Icelandic saga of Burnt Njal, is ordered to clear out of the country for three years, or take the consequences of a not inexcusable homicide.

But the expedient that most appealed to the Anglo Saxons was that of commuting the blood feud for cash down. As it was impossible to assess every man on his personal merits, there must be some sort of a customary tariff—so much for the king, so much for a "twelfhynde" man, the nearest equivalent to our "gentleman", so much for a twyhynde, or ordinary free man, and so much, payable to the master, for a slave. The first codes of law are, in fact, statements of a tariff, sanctioned by custom, which the king records, but neither initiates nor materially alters.

It is probable that no machinery at first existed for carrying out the decisions of an assembly. Sometimes the king, or ealdorman, with his followers, might ride to the offending "burh" or farmstead, and execute rough justice there and then, sometimes a contumacious offender would be left to the vengeance of the injured family. This was what happened to Gunnar. He had fair warning of what would come upon him if he stayed at home instead of fulfilling his three years' exile, but the attraction of home was too great—he stayed. For a time nothing happened, but one night his house was surrounded and himself slain. There was no more to be said; he had, as we should say, asked for it.

This system of commuting blood-feuds was not, of course, peculiar to the English nor even to the Nordic peoples. The Celts of the West also practised it, and in fact there are close analogies between

the Welsh and English tariffs. But the affections of Englishmen were less rigidly confined within the circle of the family or clan. There was therefore greater scope for development in England, for the creation of such artificial groups as the tithing, or association of ten men, and the gild, and for the gradual supersession of family vengeance by justice administered in royal or local courts, and depending for its execution upon the whole body of free and law-abiding men.

3

The Second Coming of Rome

The Anglo Saxons and kindred tribes are distinguished from other peoples in a similar stage of development by their comparative lack of superstition. Here the contrast is not only with the Celtic tribes, but with Rome herself. No student of their history can fail to remark how the Roman people, though conspicuously lacking in the spiritual feeling that is the essence of true religion, were swayed in every stage of their career, from the grotto of Egeria to the pontificate of Augustus, by a belief in magic which we may attribute to the Etruscan strain in their ancestry. The development of Roman institutions, with the glorious exception of their cosmopolitan jurisprudence, is constantly determined by some form of divine or magical right, the Sybilline Books, the pronouncements of the Augurs, the "imperium" or taboo under which the army was placed. It is small wonder that upon this basis came to be founded the thorough-going autocracy of the divine Constantine and Justinian.

The Nordic tribes certainly had their gods and magic, but in comparison even with Rome they strike us as a utilitarian folk, devising practical expedients for practical ends. The cult of Nerthus, the Earth goddess, and that of Woden, seem to have sat but lightly upon them, and the followers of a chief had few scruples about changing their religion when the chief happened to be converted. But the fact that the chiefs were so much less gods than men deprived our ancestors of what has usually been the main, cohesive force of primitive peoples, and made a proportionately heavy demand upon the personality of the ruler and the good sense of the ruled. But to weld into a nation so independent and undisciplined a folk as the English, something more than mere native commonsense was required.

Up to nearly the end of the sixth century, Britain, a theatre of confused war, was left almost entirely to her own resources.

Europe herself was in little better condition; the Western Empire had gone down beneath a succession of attacks from without and mutinies from within—the two are almost indistinguishable. A great military effort from Constantinople succeeded in winning back for the Empire Italy, Northern Africa, and a foothold on the Spanish seaboard, but the success was transitory. Rome herself was a wilderness of ruins, among which a handful of wretched inhabitants, yellow with malaria, eked out some sort of an existence. The great aqueducts had been cut by the Goths and the water flowed out into the Campagna, which became a mosquito-breeding swamp. It was amidst this desolation, and in the teeth of these desperate conditions, that a successor of Augustus in the pontificate was preparing for the re-conquest of the Western Empire, and of lands where the legions had never penetrated, by means of which Augustus had never dreamed. Never has such an instance been known of the supremacy of an idea over brute force. Even in the hour of conquest the invaders were vanquished, vanquished to their own uplifting and salvation.

When we think of the Church we must not confuse it with the Christianity, in the sense of the original teaching of its Founder. This may or may not have been the inspiration of the Church's doctrine, but the Church itself is not a spirit, but an organized society, sharply defined as to its personnel, its dogma and its discipline. When we talk of Christianity coming to the English we are describing a very complex and hardly definable process, which some people might maintain has never even yet been brought to completion. But we are on sure ground when we say that in the year 597 the Church of Rome, in the person of her missionary Augustine, came to England and received official recognition from Ethelbert, King of Kent and nominal Wielder of Britain.

The Pope who inspired this mission, the first Gregory, was one of the most remarkable who have ever occupied the chair of Peter. A Roman gentleman of wealth and culture, he became a monk and turned his palace on the Coelian Hill into a monastery. He was not only so accomplished a theologian as to be recognized as one of the four Doctors of the Latin Church, but a statesman of vision and iron courage. Though most of Italy was in the hands of the ferocious Lombards, he saw the opportunity for the Pope, as head of the Church, to assume the place left vacant by the Western Caesars, and to found a spiritual empire. It was in pursuance of this grand project that he despatched Augustine, a monk like himself, to follow the old path

of the legions, and with no other weapon than the sword of the spirit, win back for Rome the lost province of Britain.

This Augustine appears to have been cast in an altogether smaller mould than his master. The very legends that have gathered round him are of a sternness that contrast vividly with what we hear of the British Patrick or the Irish Columba. Bede has preserved for us a series of questions that Augustine put to Gregory before setting out, with the replies. Herein the characters of the two stand out clearly, the Pope large-minded and conscious of essentials, the missionary troubled with niggling conundrums more fitted for an attorney than a saint.

"Ought a woman with child to be baptized, or how long after she has brought forth may she come into Church?" "Why should not a woman with child be baptized?" is the reply, with just a suspicion of gentle rebuke, "since the fruitfulness of the flesh is no offence in the eyes of God."

Christianity at least came back to Kent with Augustine, in the sense that the cult of Christ Crucified, as interpreted by the Roman and Trinitarian Church, was now officially substituted for that of the old Pagan gods. But it would be quite as much to the point to say that with Augustine Rome came back to England, the new spiritual in place of the old temporal Empire, but more Rome than ever in the spirit of her centralized discipline, the absolute subordination of all the members to the Apostolic Head. This was, and is, the ideal which the great Gregory and his successors have constantly held before them, even though they have not always been able to realize it in full.

But the Empire of the spiritual Caesar was a more subtle creation than the old imperialism of brute force. Gregory had no legions, not a solitary cohort to back him in a policy of expansion that was to bring the lost provinces, and provinces against which the legions had broken themselves in vain, to the Roman allegiance. His assault had to be directed against the minds of those he wished to conquer, and it was a warfare in which a martyr's passivity might avail more than the will of a Marius or a Caesar. The Church had to make a business proposition of the benediction pronounced on the meek. Her armies and the garrisons, which she dotted all over her conquered territory, were composed of men trained in the school of meekness and obedience.

Gregory was remarkable not only for his vision of the spiritual Empire, but also for the means he employed to realize it. He was

the first Pope who was also a monk, and it was only natural that he should have realized what a fund of strength the Church possessed in communities of men withdrawn from the world in quest of salvation. The first monks had been little fitted to be a source of strength to the Church, except by the prestige of their example and austerities. It was to save their own souls that they forsook the world and the society of their fellows. They were monks in the true sense of the word, "monachi" or solitaries. Gradually, however, the habit of living together and according to rule began to be cultivated, and in the West, at any rate, the tendency was for the "monachi" to become "coenobites" or dwellers in communities. Early in the sixth century Saint Benedict, improving on the precedent of those early monastic legislators, Pachomius, Basil and Cassian, devised a rule which was to become practically universal throughout the monasteries of Western Europe. The many earnest souls, who, despairing of a world where the old civilization seemed crumbling into ruins, set their faces towards the Celestial City, were bidden work out their salvation, not alone with God and by almost superhuman austerities, but in service to a community and according to a strict, but not unreasonably severe discipline.

We have said that we ought to think of the Church not so much as the embodiment of Christ's teaching, as of a clearly defined and immensely powerful society. We may now go a step further, and describe it as a mind-training society, on a vast scale. And herein lies the contrast between the Catholic ideal of the Dark and Middle Ages, and the humanism which after the Renaissance gradually tended to supersede it. For the Church was at least consistently true to her Lord's teaching in holding that the life is more than meat, in other words that the end of all human endeavour ought to be the perfecting of man himself and not the increase of his possessions or the extension of his control over nature.

We are accustomed to think of the Church as essentially obscurantist, a foe to science and progress, whereas the founders of her great monastic orders, such popes as the first and seventh Gregories, her fathers and doctors and mystics, were aiming at a different kind of science and progress from that of the last feverish century and a half since the Industrial Revolution. The achievement of turning out clothes by machinery a hundred times faster than they could be by hand would have seemed less important to Saint Benedict than that of teaching men to adorn their souls and cut down their sartorial requirements to a minimum. As for

the problems discussed at the annual meetings of the British Association, they would have seemed to one of these old Churchmen of negligible importance compared with that of turning the uncivilized and fallen soul into the path of salvation and the peace that passeth human understanding. And our medieval Churchman, could he come back to life, might argue not unplausibly, that in such things as, in the eyes of himself and his contemporaries, alone counted, the Church could show a record of progressive improvement that puts our own to shame.

"And what," he might conclude, "have you to compare with our monastic rules or with the blend of discipline and persuasion which embraced every parish and weaned the Goth and the Viking to civilization? Somebody's mind-training system, at ten guineas for the same course that enabled a salesman in Huddersfield to quadruple his income in six months? Or perhaps the analysis of infantile lusts?"

The Conversion of the English

The Bretwalda Ethelbert, to whom Augustine first purposed to deliver his message, and who was already married to a Christian of the Frankish Royal House, was one of those grave and courteous Pagan gentlemen whom we might expect to find in the saga of Beowulf. He gave audience to the strangers, after taking due precautions against magic, but he was not going to be rushed into forsaking the gods of his fathers. Like a prudent sovereign, he took his time to consider the matter in all its bearings, meanwhile allowing the missionaries to reside in his capital, Canterbury, with liberty to preach. And when at last he was converted, he saw to it that the choice of his subjects should be as free as his own.

The still more famous incident, related by Bede, of the conversion of the Northumbrian King, Edwin, thirty years later, makes us realize, as nothing else could, what manner of men our ancestors were. Before Edwin came to the throne, when he was an exile and in danger of his life, an unknown messenger had appeared in a vision to answer his forebodings with a promise of deliverance and a throne, but making him engage that when these things came to pass, he would submit thereafter to be counselled by his helper. When King Edwin had happily come to his own, the messenger of the vision revealed himself as the Roman missionary Bishop,

Paulinus, who claimed the fulfilment of Edwin's side of the bargain by his acceptance of the faith. But Edwin, though answering that he himself was both willing and bound to do so, had yet to consult his friends and counsellors before he could answer for anyone's conversion but his own.

The first speaker at this remarkable debate was the Pagan chief priest, one Coifi. This worthy Angle, with the practical business instinct of his race, professed himself thoroughly sick of the old gods who, if they had been good for anything, would have brought rather better luck to their faithful servant. He was followed by one of the leading Thegns, who made the famous comparison of the life of man to the flight of a sparrow through the King's lighted hall as he sat at supper in the winter time, a moment of warmth and light between the darkness that went before and the darkness that came after, of both of which we were utterly ignorant. If therefore this new faith could afford any greater certainty, it was worth following. And to this effect spoke others, until Coifi, having requested Paulinus to give some further elucidation of his doctrine, at last relieved the tension by mounting a horse, hurling a spear into his own temple and having it burnt to the ground for a sham.

There is a Roman word *gravitas* which has no exact English equivalent, but which denotes a weightiness of soul, a sustained moral earnestness that is the corner-stone of national greatness. It is her possession of this quality that explains why England has gone further, in the long run, than other nations of greater superficial brilliance. Edwin or Ethelbert will not rush into the arms of his Saviour, but will sit with knitted brows among his counsellors, gravely deliberating the pros and cons of conversion. Even in our own day there is talk about the Englishman being averse from ideas, when the fact is that he prefers to test a new idea very thoroughly before deciding exactly how much of it he means to accept.

Rome and the discipline of Rome were not destined to make such an easy conquest of England as might have seemed probable from the success of her first missionaries. A Pagan reaction was bound to set in, once the first glamour of the new faith had dimmed and the first royal converts were dead. Paganism was firmly entrenched in the centre of England, now consolidating into the Kingdom of Mercia. Christianity was in a fair way to have been driven out of the island, had not help come from another quarter than Rome.

When Augustine had landed, he had found an active and enthusiastic Church already in being in the still unconquered West. Celtic Christianity was to all intents and purposes an independent faith, developing on its own lines. In matters of doctrine there was no marked difference from Rome, but in matters of discipline the Britons had their own time of celebrating Easter, their own way of baptism, and their own fashion of tonsure, points insignificant enough from the standpoint of primitive Christianity, but of vital importance from that of Rome, which could no more tolerate such differences than a general could allow two different codes of discipline to obtain in his command.

So far as the Welsh Church was concerned, the dispute soon came to a head. Augustine naturally made a point of meeting its representatives with a view to co-operation in evangelizing the heathen, a task which by no means appealed to the Britons, who had not got to the stage of regarding their dispossessors as men and brothers, and would probably have preferred to see them damned. They were also suspicious of this proud, spiritual empire that threatened to bring them under its yoke, and they thought out a simple method of gauging Augustine's saintliness. Would he have the courtesy to rise and receive them ? When they arrived purposely late at their second conference with him, Augustine was sitting under an oak, and he remained seated. From that moment the British churchmen decided to turn him down, and as he proved as stiff in his demands as in his posture, he met with nothing but flat negatives, notwithstanding his victory in a miracle competition, until the last shreds of his saintly temper were gone, and he proceeded to threatening that if they would not join with him, they would be warred upon to the death by the English.

The Christianity planted by Roman missionaries suffered a terrible setback when, in 633, the Bretwalda Edwin of Northumbria, a tract which comprised the East coast lowlands from the North to the Humber, was overwhelmed by the alliance of heathen Mercia and Christian North Wales. For a time it seemed as if the merciless Caedwalla might have some chance of fulfilling his ambition of cutting off the whole English race within the borders of Britain, for the most powerful of the English kingdoms had been shattered and the whole of the North was once again in British hands. The work of Paulinus was undone, and he himself, esteeming discretion the better part of martyrdom, made a somewhat ignominious escape. But within two years, by one of those swift reversals of fortune

so characteristic of the warfare of that time, Caedwalla himself was slain and Northumbria in the hands of an Anglian prince, a converted pagan, known to subsequent generations as Saint Oswald.

The second conversion of Northumbria, which had backslid to paganism as quickly as it had forsaken it under Edwin, was undertaken by Irish monks who, from their spiritual centre of Iona which they always affectionately referred to as HY, or *the* island *par excellence*, planted another monastery on what was thereafter known as Holy Island, just off the royal fortress of Bamborough. The interest of the next thirty years was less in the struggle between Christianity and an already moribund Paganism—for even that last great champion of Woden, the Mercian Penda, could not keep his own son out of the fold—than between the two competing forms of Christianity emanating from Ireland and Rome. But here too the issue could not really be in doubt. For sheer saintly fervour, for Christian gentleness and love, there is no doubt that the Celt bore away the palm. The champion of Rome militant, the proud, litigious and intriguing Wilfred, presents a less lovable figure than that of the mystic and saintly Aidan or any other of the saints of whom Celtic Christianity was at this time so prolific. But individual merit was powerless, in the long run, against the prestige and organization of the Holy See, and Rome was finally victorious when, in 664, a synod was held at Whitby to settle those points of ecclesiastical discipline about which Augustine had quarrelled with the British more than fifty years previously. The Northumbrian King Oswy, like the hard-headed Northcountryman he was, decided that it would be best to come down on Peter's side of the fence in order to avoid trouble later on at the gates of Heaven. Accordingly Wilfrid was appointed to the see of York, and the Irish monks quitted Northumbria. It must be remembered that at this time Northumbria was the most enlightened and powerful of all the English kingdoms.

At the end of the seventh century, England, as distinct from Celtic Britain, was not only Christian but Roman Catholic—if we may use a term that only came into use long afterwards. If Wilfrid was the fighting champion of Rome, her statesman and consolidator was the aged Theodore, who, like an even greater organizer of Christianity, came from Tarsus in Asia Minor. This Theodore, who was appointed to the Archbishopric of Canterbury in 668, achieved what was almost as important from the political as from the spiritual standpoint when he succeeded in uniting the

whole English Church under his leadership, and even arranging for periodical meetings of her leading men at a place which has been, not quite indisputably, identified with Cliffe-at-Hoo in Kent. Thus, if England was divided into several independent states, she was at least united as one Church, and where the Church led, it might safely be predicted that the State would follow.

5

The Church in Being

The fact of the Anglo Saxon kingdoms being brought into the fold of the Church was of profound importance in the development of our civilization. A new significance was imparted to life, and this not only in the courts and halls of the great, but in the humblest villages. As the parochial organization gradually developed, in the centre of each "ham" or "tun" arose a building with which the whole life and even death of the inhabitants was intimately bound up. This building, like the little world that, in medieval philosophy, mirrors the universe, was called by the same name as the whole body of the faithful, the great society of God's kingdom that included every man, woman and child if not as full, at least as associate members. The building was called the Church, a word that we must strip of many modern associations if we would realize the full depth of its significance for our ancestors.

Perhaps it was not everywhere new, either in structure or idea. Our all too scanty evidence, one way or the other, does not warrant our leaping to the conclusion that the Christianity of the Roman occupation was everywhere stamped out even in the occupied territories. The Walcots and Waltons, assuming them to have been "Welsh" and not "wall towns", not unlikely clung with pride and affection to the religion that was their last link with the old civilization, and the Anglo Saxons were not of the stuff of which persecutors are made. It is at least arguable that the various place-names compounded of the word "eccles", the Roman "ecclesia", testify not only to the existence of pre-British churches, but to the fact that they continued to be recognized as such. And if this is, after all, guesswork, there is more solid evidence for believing that at least the structure of old churches was sometimes capable of being repaired and restored to its original function.

The process of transformation from paganism to full-fledged

Christianity must in any case have been slow, and was probably far too various to admit of any plain generalization, even if we knew the facts. With Professor Baldwin Brown, who is incomparably the greatest authority on these times, we may conjecture that long before a church was built or a priest appointed, Christianity would have come in the guise of an itinerant missionary, a benign yet awe-inspiring personage, who would perhaps mark the place for Christ and Rome by setting up a cross, the old symbol of the sun-god. And perhaps the building of God's house would often have been preceded, for an indefinite period, by the marking out of God's acre. For the Church taught men to see this present life against the background of eternity, and it was a very human though perhaps a not altogether rational desire to know that one's mortal part, at least, would find a holy resting place.

In the first half of the eighth century we may safely assume that in all but a few very backward spots a church of some sort, with a churchman to minister therein, was part of the regular equipment of every village. Rude and wooden structures many, and indeed most of them must have been, of which all traces have long since vanished, but the change which each one of them signified for the life of the Billings or Birmings, or whatever the real or fictitious family group of villagers might be called, was nothing short of revolutionary. Here at last we may venture on generalization, for we are dealing with an organization whose very essence it was to impose one centralized faith and discipline on the whole world, or failing that, on as much of it as the statesmanship and devotion of the Roman Church could master.

We may nevertheless be ignorant of what compromises had to be made between the old order and the new, and in what various ways the staff of priests, or, as they were significantly called, mass-thegns, were at first recruited. One ingenious speculator[1] has actually propounded the theory that the lord of the village and the priest were originally the same person, and the original church-warden the lord's reeve or bailiff. This is one of those generalizations, so frequently made about Anglo Saxon England, which would be valuable if reduced to the suggestion of an occasional possibility. We have no reason for supposing that every village, or even for asserting positively that most of them, owned a lord at all at this early period, and certainly as late as William the Conqueror's Domesday Survey we have instances of churches not only in towns,

[1] Mr. S. O. Addy in *Church and Manor.*

but in the country, which appear to have belonged to groups of free men. It is certain that the Church would have set her face in England, as she did on the Continent, against God's house becoming part and parcel of the great man's hall, though even this she may have winked at here and there as a temporary arrangement. It is far more probable that where there was a lord of the village, he generally assumed something not essentially different from the modern patronage, that he appointed the priest and no doubt in practice, if not in theory, kept him very much under his thumb as a member of his household.

As to the priest's or mass-thegn's most important function, the thing that rendered his church and office terrible and dear in the eyes of the people, there is neither the need nor the room for conjecture. If we want to realize precisely the change that had come over life with Christianity, that which the Church implied and signified for the Anglo-Saxons, we can hardly do better than betake ourselves to one of the few Saxon churches that retains some semblance of its original aspect, and there spend a couple of hours in the attempt to bridge the gulf of centuries, and see it through the mind's eye of one of its earliest worshippers. Let us take the little Church of St. Laurence at Bradford-on-Avon, which, though some critics have tried to place it at a later date than that of the missionary Saint Aldhelm, who is credited with having built it by William of Malmesbury and Freeman, is nevertheless sufficiently typical of Saxon architecture to serve our purpose.

The longer one remains in this building, the deeper is the impression conveyed of the sadness, in the word's old sense of sober earnestness, that is the dominant note of the Anglo-Saxon character at its best. So small is the aisleless nave as to have more of the intimacy of a room than the spaciousness of a hall of public worship. The dim light and the extraordinary height of the walls in comparison with their breadth enhance the atmosphere of solemnity, which is entirely different from any effect of Norman sternness or Gothic aspiration. The worshippers as they strode or shambled in would naturally turn their regard to the Eastward, where a high wall, adorned with the figure (since destroyed) of the Son of God enthroned on the Rood and attended by two angels, shut off a small and sombre chamber, a Holy of Holies, only to be entered by the mass-thegn and his assistants through a portalled or curtained archway barely wide enough for a man to pass through. It was here that the most awful of all miracles was to be consummated, for by virtue of the

power passed to him through the hands of the Bishop, and to the Bishop, in a regular chain of succession, by the Archbishop, and the Holy Father, and Peter, and Christ Himself, the mass-thegn could change bread and wine into Christ's very Body and Blood. So long as this miracle was literally believed in—and to believe in any magic involved no intolerable strain on medieval credulity—the power of the Church, for good or evil, was incalculable.

It was only when armed with such credentials that she could have secured enough influence and prestige to assume her true function, that of the greatest mind-training society ever known. The notion of what certain savages know as " manas ", that fund of magical power which resides in certain individuals and things, and can be communicated by them to others, was too strong to be eradicated, and the Church did not dream of doing so. Her missionaries took the same ground as their opponents and fought them on it. They did not, like such refined sceptics as Lucian, scoff at the very notion of the old gods; they recognized them, but as devils; they admitted their opponents' magic, but they pitted against it a superior magic. Saint Patrick could beat the Druids at their own game; Saint Augustine could settle a controversy between Christians by curing a blind man. Even so masterly a historian as the Venerable Bede is constantly interrupting his narrative to record miracles. Relics of saints were talismans, and the saints themselves enjoyed a sort of posthumous existence by virtue of which they could be said to own property that legally belonged to corporations of churchmen, practice healing, and retaliate very effectively on those who annoyed them. If anyone who died in the neighbourhood of a monastery could, by hook or by crook, be elevated to sainthood, his name and shrine became assets of incalculable value. The trade in relics was, throughout the Middle Ages, as keen as that in old masters to-day, and at one time the corpse of Saint Dunstan was simultaneously at Canterbury and Glastonbury, with signs following, until the monks went to law to decide which was the official Dunstan.

The magical background was an absolute necessity if the Church was to have any chance of effecting the transformation or development of human nature at which she aimed. And it must be said of her that in dealing with the Teutonic tribes her influence was, in almost every respect and in so far as we may assume an agreed standard of moral values, an elevating one. Many of the worst features of paganism she did away with altogether, and where she

did not set her face absolutely against such evils as slavery and the ordeal, she gradually modified and humanized them till they became moribund.

The basis of her psychological method was to give a new orientation to life. Henceforth it was no longer the flight of a sparrow across a lighted hall into the unknown, but the preparation for an eternity of which the Church could give a lucid and, to her children, entirely satisfactory account, of which she could even paint pictures on her walls. The choice was offered every believer between passing an eternity of bliss with angels, or an eternity of torture by devils. And it was made very clear that there was no escaping from the less desirable alternative save by the good offices of, and through obedience to the Church. The Sacraments, and particularly the perpetually renewed miracle of the Holy Eucharist, were the only means by which the saving grace of Christ could be communicated to naturally damned human beings, and the sacraments could only be administered by Churchmen to whom the requisite "manas" had been communicated by the laying on of hands. The disciplined organization which was believed to possess the keys of eternal life and death was thus placed in a position of immense power.

Such a society could not function without funds, and it was only natural for the Church to use her great powers in order to enforce the payment of subscriptions. She could do what no king could have attempted in claiming first as a spiritual and afterwards as a legal obligation the payment of tithe, equivalent, in modern terms, to a permanent income tax of two shillings in the pound. The direct tribute to Rome known as Peter's Pence followed towards the close of the eighth century, and by the beginning of the tenth had become a regular imposition of a penny on every hearth. The piety of kings induced them, from time to time, to "book" lands to religious bodies and free them, wholly or in part, from the obligation of contributing to the expenses of government and national defence. Finally these monasteries, by dint of organized labour and particularly of sheep farming, attracted an ever-increasing proportion of the general wealth into their own treasury chests. Thus the spiritual power of the Church quickly reinforced itself by a no less formidable money power.

The Church of Christ was also the Church of Rome, and so well had Christianity been grafted on to Roman organization that it is hard to say where Christ's part ends and Caesar's begins. No doubt the spirit of His Excellency Pilate and His Holiness Caiaphas were

sometimes at least as much in evidence as that of the irrepressible Revolutionary from Nazareth. But it is arguable that without such an infusion Christianity must, by all human calculations, have been overwhelmed in the West and have lingered on, if at all, under the auspices of the Eastern Empire in forms certainly not more Christlike. It needed all the experience and administrative tradition of Rome to enable the Church to accomplish the tremendous task of civilization that but for her must have been postponed indefinitely.

One of her first cares was to educate at least a sufficient number of the population to enable her services, both in her parish and monastery churches, to be competently performed. The mere fact that her Roman traditions impelled her to impose one universal language, caused her to set up grammar schools for the teaching of Latin, and hence to keep up some sort of acquaintance with the classics. Again the choral part of the ritual created a demand for what were known as song schools. It was one of the first tasks of Augustine to establish a grammar school at Canterbury, and this was soon followed by a song school at Rochester. But the fame of these Southern schools was soon to be eclipsed by the great North-umbrian foundations of York and Wearmouth. These centres of higher education were, in effect, training schools for what Coleridge would have called " the clerisy ", but the needs of the laity were not forgotten. It was the aim of the Church that her parish priests should provide free instruction of an elementary kind for the children of such parents as chose to send them, and this not only in letters but, sometimes at any rate, in manual arts.

The parish church [1] was thus the centre round which the whole spiritual and no small part of the temporal life of the neighbourhood revolved. It was the mind or soul factory in which raw human material was taken in hand and civilized. To its present-day functions the parish church, including the churchyard, added those of a school, a club, a centre of business, a court-house and even a theatre and place of amusement. Mother Church, already with centuries of experience behind her, knew how to handle her souls not only with firmness but with tact. She did not insist on a violent break with habits consecrated by centuries of paganism ; she knew too much of human nature to trust to crude repression ; her way was that which modern psychologists know as sublimation. She gradually Christianized the old pagan magic. The fire festival

[1] See the chapter on " The Church and the People " in the first volume of Mr. Baldwin Brown's *Arts in Early England.*

at midsummer became Saint John's Eve, and the return of the sun at midwinter the birth of the Saviour whose Cross was the old sun-cross. The ritual dances and junketings she allowed to continue, in a modified form, in the churchyard, though under a gradually lowering cloud of official disapproval, until she had substituted her own pageants and mystery plays. Even the appeal to judicial magic, in the form of the ordeal, was taken under her unwilling patronage—it took her more than seven centuries to get rid of it.

Perhaps the crown of her achievement was the intensive training she gave in her monasteries. In the parishes she had to deal cautiously and gradually with men in whose minds the time-honoured cares and ambitions of this world competed constantly with the desire for salvation in the next. But her communities of monks were composed of men who had deliberately abandoned the world in order to concentrate all their energies on the one object of perfecting themselves according to the Church's rules. The monastic rule of the Roman Church in the seventh century was to all intents and purposes that of Saint Benedict, and the Synod of Whitby definitely decided the question that the English monks should conform to this and not to the more individualistic standard of the Celts.

Viewed in the light of a mind-training society, it must be admitted that the Church accomplished her mission of turning Pagans into civilized Christians with an organized efficiency compared with which our modern efforts to turn men into supermen must appear blundering and half-hearted. It may be argued that this was because she was dealing with very simple souls and setting before herself a limited ideal. The kind of man she aimed at turning out would probably be incapable, at any rate intellectually, of coping with modern requirements, and in certain respects fell short of the standard set up by the intelligentsia of Greece and Augustan Rome. But considering the fact that the Church was engaged in salvaging Western civilization from the flood that threatened to sweep away its last vestiges, and that she was composed of and working with the very human material she sought to improve, we can only wonder at her almost miraculous achievement in leading Europe through its Dark Age to that of chivalry and the gilds, of the universities and Gothic cathedrals.

6

The Golden Age of Northumbria

Any student of the seventh and eighth centuries can hardly fail to be struck by the unimportance of political as compared with ecclesiastical history. To say that England was united politically under this or that Bretwalda has about as much meaning as to say that Europe in 1913 was united under Germany and in 1923 under France. But that England was united spiritually under Archbishop Theodore as a province of the Roman Church is an event of definite and far-reaching importance. To the average man, engaged in tilling the soil in some almost self-sufficing village community, and only occasionally called out for service in his lord's retinue or with the "fyrd" or tribal militia, the Church was a more intimate and living reality than ever the King could be. There was no national flag or national anthem to foster a Northumbrian or Kentish patriotism in such a village, but there was constantly in every man's sight the Cross of Christ and His Church, and even when he was working in the field, the sound of the sanctus bell would float to him, and he would drop his tool and fall on his knees to partake for a moment of the comfort and refreshment that emanated from Christ's altar.

Such spiritual unity throughout England must needs pave the way to unity in the less important sphere of politics. The little tribal kingdoms had not deep enough roots in the past, and were too much exposed to attack, to possess the elements of permanence. The one thing that kept them independent was the impossibility of setting up any adminstrative organization to control more than a limited area. Even conquest had not much more meaning than that one King and his followers had succeeded in slaughtering another King and his followers. To a churl in one of the Northumbrian dales it probably signified little that his own King Oswald had been killed by Penda of Mercia, unless it happened that one of Penda's bands succeeded in raiding his particular village. But no Mercian tax collector was likely to demand a percentage of the year's harvest, nor would King Penda's reeve administer Mercian law in the local court. Life in the village would go on much the same until, in a very few years' time, some successor of Oswald would beat up an army and start the game over again with as fair a chance of turning the tables on Penda as a cricket team of winning a return match.

Amid these loosely organized communities with their inconsequential squabbles the Church succeeded in setting up a highly developed administrative and fiscal system, embracing the whole of non-Celtic England. Rome was teaching her converts, from the kings to the humblest free men, the advantage of doing things by fixed rules, and she was imparting some notion, however rudimentary, of ordering life scientifically. Augustine's convert, Ethelbert of Kent, is the first Anglo Saxon King who is known to have attempted the codification of his own law or tariff of blood-fines, while Edwin of Northumbria was so taken with the notion of imperial dignity that he used to go about among his subjects preceded by a standard bearer with the Roman tufa, and he conducted his administration with such new-found efficiency that during his short reign it was said that a woman, with her baby, might have walked unharmed from sea to sea. From this time forth it becomes steadily less of an anachronism to talk about Anglo Saxon institutions.

It was in Northumbria that during the second half of the seventh century the fire of newly awakened Christianity burned with its brightest radiance. The earnest Angles, weary of gods in whom they only half believed, and oppressed by the sense of an almighty wyrd from which there was no release, eagerly accepted the good news of salvation, and bent all their energies to giving it practical expression. It was not only for the heart that Rome had brought food. The learning of the empire—such of it as had survived—was brought to England by such men as Archbishop Theodore, who spoke Greek as his native tongue, and his devoted friend, Abbot Hadrian, an African scholar who had refused the Archipiscopal dignity for himself and recommended it for Theodore. "Forasmuch," writes Bede, "as both of them were well read both in sacred and secular literature, they gathered a crowd of disciples, and there daily flowed from them rivers of knowledge to water the hearts of their hearers; and together with books of holy writ, they also taught them the arts of ecclesiastical poetry, astronomy and arithmetic . . . nor were there ever happier times since the English came into Britain; for their kings, being brave men and good Christians, they were a terror to all barbarian nations, and the minds of all men were bent upon the heavenly kingdom the joys of which they had just heard; and all who desired to be instructed in sacred reading had masters at hand to teach them." [1]

There is a childlike freshness about the English reception of the

[1] Translation. Temple Classics.

new faith. We hear of Aldhelm, a scholar of European fame, who became Abbot of Malmesbury in Wessex, standing on a bridge and singing like a wandering gleeman to attract converts. For there was music in the heart of the English people. It is Bede who tells us the story of Caedman, a shy herd-boy in the service of Whitby Abbey, who, when folk agreed for the sake of mirth that all present should sing in their turn, seeing the instrument come his way, got up from the table and went home. But afterwards in a dream one appeared to him, who said, "Caedmon, sing me something," and when Caedmon asked "What shall I sing?" replied, "Sing the beginning of created things." Forthwith the poor herd-boy burst, like one of the morning stars, into praise of Him "who first, as almighty preserver of mankind, created Heaven for the sons of men as the roof of the house, and next the earth". Hilda, the great abbess, instantly recognized his genius and made him join the brethren. Thenceforward "whatever was interpreted to him out of Scripture, he afterwards put the same into poetical expressions of much sweetness and humility in English, which was his native language".

Christ was intensely alive and very human to these men, the divine Beowulf, the good prince who toils and suffers for his folk. On the cross at Ruthwell we can just decipher the words, "I, the powerful King, the Lord of Heaven, I durst not bend." Like to their master were the apostles, "Lo, we have heard of twelve glorious men in the old days under the stars, the thegns of God, nor did their glory fail them in the fray when standards massed together." [1] This faith was a thing so joyously simple, that our minds, sophisticated by the doubts and controversies of many ages, find it hard to comprehend. "So He showeth honour on His handiwork. Of Him the prophet spake that holy gems were lifted up on high, the radiant stars of heaven, the sun and moon . . . above the earth gleameth the moon, a ghostly star; even so shineth bright the Church of God when righteousness and truth are met together." [2]

For quite half a century after the coming of Archbishop Theodore, Northumbria became a centre from which Christian culture was diffused over Western Europe, a meteor across the dim light of that age, too dazzling to last, but strong enough, while it lasted, to dart its radiance through all the confines of heathendom, and even to suffuse, with its last beams, the Court of Charlemagne.

[1] *The Poems of Cynewulf*, translated by C. W. Kennedy, p. 211.
[2] Ib., p. 173.

English Churchmen displayed a passionate enthusiasm for acquiring such learning as could be saved from the wreck of Roman civilization. Benedict Biscop, Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, who escorted Theodore and Hadrian to England, made no less than five journeys to Rome, from which he brought back a generous supply of manuscripts and objects of art. On the ruins of York rose a school endowed with a magnificent library, including all the accessible classics, Aristotle and Cicero, Virgil and Lucan, besides the Fathers of the Church. Wilfrid himself, with all his faults of pride and worldliness, spared no pains in enriching his countrymen with the best that Latin civilization had to give, importing workmen to teach the art of stone masonry " in the Roman style ". Early in the eighth century England becomes the teacher, and we find Naitan, King of the Picts, writing to Jarrow for masons to build him a Church in the Roman style.

The art of singing Gregorian chants, then in their first freshness, was brought from Rome by John the Precentor. Painting came over, stiff Byzantine figures, but real enough to men whose unsophisticated imaginations were more capable than our own of supplying the missing details. Glass-making, an art with which the Nordic peoples were already acquainted, was pressed into the service of religion, and we find Saint Cuthbert writing from Jarrow to the Archbishop of Mainz for skilled glass-workers, " seeing that in that art we are ignorant and without resource." It is important to realize that fifty years of this little coastwise strip of Anglian Northumbria have bequeathed us a literary and artistic heritage incomparably superior to that of nearly four centuries of the Roman occupation of Britain.

For all her imported magnificence imperial Rome had cast a blight over every form of originality in her provinces. But Northumbria and, to a lesser extent, the other English kingdoms, more than made up in vital energy for what they lacked in the amenities and experience of civilization. Northumbria speaks with a crudeness that the intelligentsia of old Eboracum would have scoffed at as barbarous, but she speaks with her own voice and with a power and freshness beyond the reach of time. And it may be asked how the return of Roman civilization in the seventh century worked the precisely opposite effect to that of its coming in the first.

It is not enough to say that spiritual Rome after all had not the absolute " imperium " that accompanied the legions, that she had to persuade where she had once ordered and to proceed by tact and compromise. This is no doubt true as far as it goes, but the

main explanation is to be sought in the fact that Rome was only one, and that not the most vital, of a number of influences that combined in generating the spirit of English civilization. True, she supplied the strong framework without which most of that youthful energy would have dissipated itself in vain. But the whole tendency of recent research has been to show that the proportionate influence of Rome has been exaggerated, in spite of her formal triumph.

It is not without its significance that the centre of light and learning was in the part of England furthest from Rome and most exposed to Celtic influence. The Runic crosses, of which those at Ruthwell and Bewcastle are among the most precious relics of Northumbrian art, have their counterparts in the Isle of Man and all over Ireland, and the art of illuminating manuscripts came by way of Iona to Lindesfarne. King Oswy's fiat at Whitby might cause the adoption of the Roman Easter and the Roman system, but it could not root up the seed already sown by the glowing and ascetic Celts, and Peter, at best, could only water where Columba had done most of the planting.

The Celtic influence has long been recognized and allowed for. It is only of recent years, however, that the researches of an Austrian scholar, Professor Strzygowski, have effected what bids fair to prove a veritable revolution in our notions about the origin of Christian art in general and English art in particular. The classical influence has, by this showing, been much exaggerated, and the main source not only of Gothic, but even of Byzantine and so-called Romanesque art, must be sought within the limits not of the Roman but of the Parthian Empire, in the country East and North East of Syria. Here, when nascent Christianity had been a religion prescribed and persecuted by the Caesars, it had been tolerated and suffered to find its own modes of architectural and artistic expression, modes which were naturally influenced by those of neighbouring Persia, with its traditions of Zoroastrian Mazdaism. This living art owed nothing essential of its development to the dead formulas of Rome.

It is impossible to predict how far Professor Strzygowski's theory will stand in need of modification, but in view of the overwhelming array of evidence he has produced, it is safe to say that we can never return to the limited outlook consecrated by centuries of educational concentration on Greece and Rome. The Professor has had no difficulty in showing how both Northumbrian and Celtic art are permeated by the symbolic conventions of Persian Mazdaism,

evidenced particularly in the vine decoration and figure sculpture on the three great crosses of Ruthwell, Bewcastle, and Bishop Acca. He has also urged that the timber-roofed Roman basilica constitutes an architectural blind alley and that the principles of vaulted construction already developed in the East were bound to be adopted by Nordic peoples as soon as they abandoned wooden for stone construction.

These influences must have come to England by the same routes of communication with the Near East that existed before the Roman conquest and, indeed, before the dawn of history. The sea route to Ireland and Western England had, probably, never been closed, and undoubtedly played its part in fostering the growth of the Celtic Christian civilization which Augustine found in such vigorous opposition to his Romanizing schemes. And there is the other, even more important, land route across Russia by way of Kieff to the Baltic, by means of which the Nordic tribes were exposed to a steady current of Oriental influence even before the bursting of the Roman barriers.

But however much we may assign to this or that outside influence, the main impelling force of English art and thought must be sought for in the English themselves, or rather in the mixtures of peoples brought about by the circumstances of the conquest. The Pagan invaders had not the refined taste of Athens or Rome, but they were honest and skilful craftsmen, and it was not for nothing that they deified the father of smiths, the ancient Weland. For it was in metalwork that their skill was chiefly shown, whether in weapons or ornaments, coins or jewellery. Such workmen as these only wanted a little education, a little stimulus from outside, to develop their natural genius.

The development of Anglo-Saxon architecture is by no means simple. Rome, now in undisputed sway over the Church, naturally tried to impose her standards on the stubborn islanders. And Rome, now that the Eastern Empire could set the fashion from her outpost at Ravenna, was herself largely influenced by the semi-Oriental standards of Byzantium. The Continental influence was always strong, first from Italy and afterwards, when Ravenna passed into Papal hands and Frankish power overshadowed the West, from Germany, but the English, while frequently copying or adapting foreign styles, were all the time evolving one of their own, with the high single nave and narrow chancel entrance that we see at Bradford-on-Avon, and usually with the addition of a Western

tower, a style marked, at its best, by an engaging simplicity and earnestness.

But in architecture the Anglo-Saxons, perhaps because they derived their original inspiration from a smith and not from a builder, seemed half afraid to assert their individuality to the full. If we return to this same church of Bradford-on-Avon, and look at it this time from the outside, we shall see a row of dummy arches about half way up, which merely seem put there to show how truly Roman the builder wishes us to think him. Of the same class are the so called pilaster strips stuck on to the surface of walls which we find both here, and in most other pre-Conquest buildings. The free development of a native architecture, in spite of the distinctive charm that no Anglo-Saxon building fails to evince, is partially frustrated by this spirit of timidity or snobbishness, and proves a little disappointing.

As craftsmen the English were hampered by no such disabilities. The beautiful Ormside bowl, now in the York museum, evinces a skill in chasing that might have warmed the heart of Weland himself. And to whatever influences they may testify, the early Northumbrian crosses, with their free and sure carving, are veritable masterpieces of this branch of stone masonry. But perhaps most people would say that the crowning glory of Northumbrian art was in the illumination of manuscripts, which had been already carried to a high degree of perfection in Ireland and had come to Northumbria by way of Iona. The gospel manuscript of Lindesfarne shares with the slightly later gospels of Kells in Meath the honour of constituting the *ne plus ultra* of illuminated art, and this in spite of the naive crudeness of human figure drawing which, as in Japanese art, accompanies a supreme mastery of decorative composition and colouring. A comparison between the two shows that though the English might learn from Ireland as they did from Rome, they were no more disposed to be the copyists of the one than of the other. The Celtic wildness and exuberance of fancy are in striking contrast with the more disciplined taste of the Northumbrian artist, and each is perfect of its kind.

The Church had brought a new civilization to England, and had turned the little Pirate Kingdom North of the Humber into a nursery of scholars and artists. But for this service she exacted a terribly severe price, and if for a short time she exalted Northumbria to the spiritual leadership of the West, she left her drained of energy and a prey to invasion from abroad and internal anarchy.

We have spoken of the Church as a mind-training society on a vast scale, and no more in the days of our fathers than our own could such a society continue to function on any other than a business footing. The Church took her toll not only in material wealth, but by a perpetual levy on human capital. There are few who, in the light of her achievement, will say that the price was extortionate.

For one thing, the monasteries which she planted all over the land constituted a eugenic drain of the most serious description. It is one of the Church's proudest boasts that she, for the first time, presented the spectacle of woman on a mental and spiritual equality with man. Among the great figures of that age, there is scarce one greater than the Abbess Hilda of Whitby, and none more charming than the missionary Lioba. Where, according to the lax practice that obtained here, men and women were associated in the same community, the head of it was the abbess. But such a sexual revolution could only be accomplished by withdrawing women from the business of bearing and rearing children, and in fact, by skimming the cream of the nation's motherhood. A corresponding tax was levied on fatherhood, and to make matters worse, kings and statesmen, whom their countries could ill spare, kept on retiring to monasteries in the fullness of their powers. Thus the intensive mind-training that the Church supplied was accomplished, to a certain extent, at the expense of the next generation, and it is something more than a coincidence that national disaster has so frequently trodden on the heels of national piety.

The evil in Northumbria was intensified by the fact that the Church was not as yet perfectly mistress in her own house. After the first flush of enthusiasm, monastic life became less and less of a disciplined quest for salvation, and more and more of an excuse for well-born and lazy people to lead a comfortable life and evade any sort of public duty or even taxation.

We have a vivid account of the state of degeneracy into which Northumbria was sinking so early as 735, in a letter from the aged Bede to Egbert, the first Archbishop of York. Bede was not only a devoted Churchman but a Northumbrian patriot, and he could not close his eyes to what he saw going on around him. The most serious thing of all was that as spiritual fervour grew cold in the Church, the temporal drain that she levied on the country grew more and more intolerable. The multiplication of so-called monasteries was making it impossible to recruit an adequate army.

eight sovereigns, one of them a chronic invalid, and the last four boys on their accession. Where so much depended on the personality of the King, it was hopeless to expect that under such circumstances Alfred's task of reconstructing English civilization on a national basis could be successfully carried through.

For no less than three generations, however, it seemed as though the impossible might be achieved. The fortunes of England attained a fair semblance of peaceful prosperity in the reign of Edgar (from 959 to 975), a boy of sixteen who had the sense to lean on the advice of the most remarkable Englishman of that century, Dunstan, who had been made Abbot of Glastonbury in the reign of Edgar's father, and whom Edgar recalled from exile to the archbishopric first of York and then of Canterbury. Dunstan was an English churchman of the best type, a strenuous and level-headed reformer who did not allow his devotion to the Church to conflict with his loyalty to his country. He was a lover of song, a designer of beautiful apparel, and so renowned an exponent of the craft of Weland Smith that tradition has credited him with having tweaked the nose of Beelzebub with a pair of red-hot tongs, when that potentate showed too intrusive an interest in the smithy.

Dunstan availed himself of his young sovereign's support and the comparative peace that followed on the reconquest of the Midlands and North, to make a supreme effort to carry through the work of reconstruction that Alfred had taken in hand. The great King had done all that one man could do—more than any but he would have done—to revive the civilization that the Danes had almost extinguished, but during the first half of the century disappointingly little had been achieved. True, there was a vernacular literature which we may fairly trace to Alfred's inspiration, and which was capable of rising to such heights as the saga of Brunanburh, one of the few great battle poems in the English language. A high standard of craftsmanship was evinced in the coins struck for Edward the Elder, though this was hardly maintained in the reigns of his successors. But the levelling up of the whole nation, morally and intellectually, for which Alfred had laboured, was still far to seek. A time of war, demanding the whole energies of the people, is not one for education and moral reform.

By the middle of the tenth century the influence of a great religious revival was making itself felt in England. The beginning of this century saw the dark ages at their darkest throughout Western Europe. The Christian Empire of Charlemagne had gone to pieces;

the heathen and the faithful of Islam were everywhere gaining ground; even the Church seemed to have forgotten her civilizing mission. The Benedictine fire was almost out, and the spiritual Empire of the West seemed in a fair way to share the fate of its temporal predecessor. But the Church's vitality is such that seldom, in the hour of darkest crisis, has she failed to arouse one of those great spiritual revivals in which some have seen a special intervention of Providence. And so it happened in the tenth century that in the monastery of Cluny, near Mâcon, a series of remarkable abbots succeeded in refurbishing the Rule of Saint Benedict. It was from Cluny that the impulse was given that led to the tremendous revival of the Church in the eleventh century.

It was as an influence and not by the establishment of Cluniac Houses that the revival came to England in the tenth century. Before he had been recalled by Edgar, Dunstan had been an exile in Flanders, which was thoroughly under the Cluniac influence. No sooner had he gained power to put his ideas into effect, than he, with the aid of two reforming bishops, Oswald of Worcester and Ethelwold of Winchester, set himself to purge the Augean stable of English monastic life, to restore the strict observance of the Benedictine rule and to stop the scandalous indiscipline which permitted foundations which had formerly housed monks to fall into the hands of married, or worse than married non-resident canons. Dunstan himself and Oswald proceeded in the matter with tact and charity, but Ethelwold was made of sterner stuff and producing a bundle of cowls, offered his canons of Winchester the choice between immediate acceptance or expulsion. It is not surprising that they are supposed to have returned the compliment by trying to poison him.

The fact is that the new discipline was far from being popular. There was a time when a monk had only to appear in the street for people to start hooting him, and national disunion was made worse by the formation of clerical and anti-clerical parties. This is no doubt partly accounted for by the vested interests that were threatened by the reformers, but also by the fact that the monasteries, with their privileges and exemptions, absorbed more and more of England's wealth and man-power. On the other hand, the sole hope of educating and civilizing the nation, and indeed of preventing Europe itself from lapsing into barbarism, lay with these communities withdrawn from the world, in which art and learning could find a refuge until the dawn of a brighter day.

During Edgar's reign it must have seemed to a superficial observer as if England were launched upon a career of peace and prosperity. The supremacy of the house of Cerdic was unquestioned from the Forth to the Clyde, and the series of excellent "dooms" decreed by this King and his predecessors testified to a more coherent social organization than that envisaged by the old tariff of blood fines. But the foundations of this prosperity were all too shallow. It is doubtful whether we can speak of an English nation except in the most shadowy sense. As Green has pointed out, it was less a question of the King controlling the ealdormen than of the ealdormen struggling together for power over the King. It was something, perhaps, that the Kingship was an established institution for the ealdormen to quarrel over.

Nor must we argue from the laws that have been preserved, as if their execution answered to the intentions of the law-giver. It must, at best, have been very rough and ready, and there was perhaps as much of Lynch law as of any other kind. In one illuminating passage of the Chronicle we are informed, almost casually, that "this year King Edgar ordered all Thanet land to be plundered". Wrecking apears to have been the offence and this was the "peaceful" King's method of dealing with it, a method copied by at least three of his successors, including the saintly "Edward the Confessor". Again, on two separate occasions the laws of Athelstan make provision for the contingency of a man being so rich, or of so powerful a family, that he can neither be punished nor kept from committing and abetting crime. We gather that cases of this kind must have been fairly common.

It was Edgar who elaborated a system of primitive police for the different hundreds or groups of villages. The hue and cry is to be raised after a thief, probably a horse or cattle thief, by order of the "hundred man", and he is to inform the "tithing men", or heads of each group of ten freemen, and they are all to ride after the thief under pain of fines or, in the last resort, of outlawry. If they chase him into another hundred they are to notify the hundred man there, and so forth. The cumbrousness of such a system need hardly be pointed out, and what actually happened was probably a much more informal affair, anticipating the palmy days of the Wild West.

The old Anglo-Saxon habit of "mooting" affairs of importance was extended and regularized. Meetings were supposed to be held twice a year in the shires, once every four weeks in the hundreds

and probably at still more frequent intervals in the villages. Doubtless a good deal of conviviality and "butt filling", to adopt the expressive phrase of one of Athelstan's laws, relieved the serious business of these assemblies. John Bull was, even in those days, nothing if not clubbable, and those time-honoured aids to fellowship, drink and religion, can seldom have failed to play their part in the all-important transition from the old family unit of society to more artificial and adaptable groupings. It was indeed his capacity for making such a transition that most distinguished the Anglo-Saxon from the Celt in the political sphere.

In the tenth century laws we hear less than before about the kindred and the blood-fine. It seems to be the object of all this legislation to deal with every man not as an individual, but as the member of some group who can guarantee and be responsible for his good character. We hear a good deal about the tything, or group of ten men, though it is needless to suppose that this number was exactly adhered to. These little clubs, or artificial families, must have been the embryo of the gilds which were so vital a constituent of medieval society. Indeed the gild-forming habit appears to have been fully developed long before the Conquest, and to have taken the form of impelling any body of neighbours who possessed interests in common to unite, primarily on a religious basis. Even priests appear to have had their gilds. It is obvious how, in centres of population and therefore of trade, the gilds, without losing their religious aspect, might come in time to consist of people with the same business interests, and, in fact, to form the economic framework of society.

A result of the Danish invasion and the distressful state to which the country was reduced could not fail to be in England, as in the rest of Western Europe, a considerable increase in the powers of the lord, or local strong man, both over the village communities and the Church. The central government was far off, the Danish host moved with fearful rapidity, and a community of independent free men would have stood small chance of surviving a raid. It was best to have a right to the protection of some one capable of sheltering and rallying the folk at short notice, and such protection was not to be had for nothing. Two results followed from this, one the gradual feudalization of the country, the increasing cult of the maxim "no land without a lord", though owing to the happy illogicality of the English nature this process was carried out in a very irregular and haphazard way before the Conquest; the other

was the power obtained by laymen over the Church, particularly over the parish priests, who became rather their servants than their Fathers in God. This was the evil which turned the Cluniac revival of the tenth and eleventh centuries into a war for the independence of the Church.

On the death of Edgar, still a young man, the inevitable catastrophe followed hard. The ealdormen were thoroughly out of hand; much of Dunstan's reforming work was undone; faction and personal rivalry flourished unchecked; a boy king was callously done to death without any attempt to avenge him; his successor, Ethelred, a boy of ten, grew up into one of the worst kings that has ever sat on an English throne, alternately shiftless and violent. The Danes returned. The navy, Alfred's creation, had been allowed to decay; the army was never in time or at the right place. The King fell back on the expedient, for which he could have pleaded the precedent of Alfred, of buying the Danes off. But he did not use the time gained, as Alfred did, to organize the nation for resistance. The Danish appetite for blackmail grew with each successive levy. Finally Ethelred, with all a weak man's love for sudden violence, ordered a treacherous massacre of Danes, presumably recent settlers domiciled in his kingdom. This was the beginning of the end. Paralyzed by the incompetence of their sovereign and handicapped by treason, the English forces were ill fitted to make a stand against the now infuriated Danes. The wretched Ethelred fled over the seas, and left the Danish King Sweyn to occupy the vacant throne. There was a brief interlude of Sweyn's death, Ethelred's restoration and death, and a desperate war between their respective sons, Canute and Edmund, in which Englishmen at last had a chance to show what they could do under a competent leader. But Edmund was doomed to the usual fate of Alfred's House, he died young and just when his country had most need of him, leaving England under the undisputed sway of a Danish King.

The noblest product of this struggle is the war song that recalls the death of Brihtnoth, the gallant Ealdorman of Essex, who lost his life in a vain attempt to repel a Viking raid, in 991, at Maldon. The account of the last stand of the thegns over the body of their lord is a song of defeat worthy to be compared with the Serbian epic of Kossovo. What, in all the records of loyal devotion, surpasses the speech of the old thegn,

"Heart shall the harder be,
Mind shall the keener be,
Mood shall the more be
As our main lessens . . .
. . . I am old of years,
Hence stir will I not,
But I by the half
Of my lord,
By such a loved man
To lie am thinking." [1]

So, amid a blaze of glory, declines the light of Anglo-Saxon civilization.

[1] Freeman's translation.

CHAPTER III

CELTIC CIVILIZATION

1

Celtic Origins

We shall best study the Celtic civilization in Ireland and Wales. Scotland, with its diversity of races and its debatable South Eastern frontier can hardly be said to have found its soul, or to have had the same historical importance, during the first Millennium of our Era. In no part of the British Isles was there so little homogeneity of peoples. The Angles thrust up from Northumbria and occupied the fertile South Eastern lowlands; a people akin to the Welsh had the South Western region of Strathclyde; in the extreme South-West corner were the Picts of Galloway; Irish invaders had established a Kingdom in the West which was to attain a temporary predominance; to the North lay the Picts, a people whose origin is still disputed. Later, the Danes swept round the Northern and Western coasts, occupied all the islands, and established settlements on the mainland.

The most important of all these competitors for supremacy proved ultimately to be the Northumbrian Angles. True, the effort to establish an English hegemony over Scotland proved not only disastrous in itself, but the ruin of the Northumbrian Kingdom. There is a passage in Bede which has a tragic significance as describing not only the downfall of Northumbrian power in Scotland, but foreshadowing the long agony of England's relations with Ireland.

"In the year of our Lord's incarnation 684, Egfrid, King of the Northumbrians, sending Beort, his general, with an army, into Ireland, miserably wasted that harmless nation, which had always been most friendly to the English; insomuch that in their hostile rage they spared not even churches nor monasteries. These islanders, to the utmost of their power, repelled force with force, and imploring the assistance of the divine mercy, prayed long and fervently for vengeance; and though such as curse cannot possess the Kingdom

of God, it is believed that those who were justly cursed on account of their impiety did soon suffer the penalty of their guilt from the avenging hand of God ; for the very next year that same King, rashly leading his army to ravage the province of the Picts . . . was drawn into the straits of inaccessible mountains, and slain, with the greater part of his forces." [1]

But Northumbria, though her power was driven out of Scotland, was yet to give the guiding impulse to Scottish history. The Anglian farmers of the Lothians not only occupied the most fertile strip of the country, but their practical commonsense and capacity for organization were calculated to supply just that element which a mainly Celtic people most needed. The differences between Scot and Pict gradually disappear, the very name Pict vanishes out of history. A dynasty of Irish descent comes to lord it over the whole of Scotland, but the tendency is for the centre of gravity to shift towards the Northumbrian lowlands. Edwin's burgh becomes Edinburgh and in the eleventh century King Malcolm Canmore, with his English wife, brings Scotland into line with Anglo-Norman polity and Roman religion.

In Brythonic or British Wales, and in Goidelic or Gaelic Ireland, the old Celtic civilization is too strong to be supplanted short of sheer conquest in Wales, and not even by conquest in Ireland. In using these terms, Brythonic, Goidelic and Celtic, we are entering upon one of the most disputed provinces in ethnology, and we need not deal at length with controversies that are as frequently swayed by love of country as that of truth, in which the data for a final decision are lacking, and about which the one thing that is really certain is that no simple solution is to be found.

This at least we know, that Europe contains no such thing as a pure race. In using the term Celt, we must not be taken to imply that Irishmen and Welshmen are unmixed descendants of the stock that held Rome to ransom in the days of Brennus and, as the Cimbri, were shattered by Marius a century before the birth of Christ. Conquest and migration must have produced the strangest mixture of blood, for exterminations, like Matthew Arnold's miracles, do not happen, even when the conquerors are such piously conscientious butchers as Chosen People.

It is a commonplace of ethnology that there were in both Wales and Ireland pre-Celtic stocks that combined with subsequent invaders in quite unascertainable proportions. Indeed nobody who has lived

[1] Translation, *Temple Classics*.

among the dark and wiry Welshmen can doubt the blood-predominance among them of a stock more akin to Mediterranean brunette than Celtic blonde. But spirit is more potent than blood, and there is a bond of language and temperament uniting the peoples lumped together under the inaccurate but convenient designation of Celtic.

Ireland, like Britain, was peopled by wave on wave of immigrants, to whom her earliest traditions bear a shadowy and distorted witness. It is not without its significance that the most ancient band of these, which was wiped out by a plague, was supposed to have been under the leadership of one Partolon, whose name may well be a variation of that of the legendary invader of Britain, the Trojan Brutus. Dr. Waddell claims to have discovered traces of this Partolon in Scotland, and derives his name from a Hittite-Phoenician root, "Barat," which he finds in the Indian Mahabharata and the name of Britain. However much we discount this theory—and in arguing from philology we are no doubt on treacherous ground—some significance must surely be allowed to the Eastern origin which Irish tradition assigns to the successive invasions, and we may at least respectfully hazard the suggestion that the attention of historians has been focussed somewhat too exclusively on Gaul as the starting point for immigration, to the neglect of the coast route from the Mediterranean. Partolon, according to the story, started from Spain.

We are on firm ground, however, when we say that after a Bronze Age in Ireland, during which the symbolic craftsmanship of the Celt was plied with a skill and taste unsurpassed, of their kind, anywhere, a fresh band of invaders arrived from Gaul with iron weapons and tools, against which the bronze stood as little chance as the Dervish spear against the Lee Metford. These conquerors appear to have been a tolerant folk, on the whole, and to have allowed the native tribes and kingdoms to live on under conditions of more or less honourable vassalage. Thus when we speak of Celtic Ireland gradually emerging into the light of history, it is in the knowledge that we are speaking not of one stock, but of many—more perhaps than historians have allowed for—blended together in varying proportions. But the dominant note in art, in language, in temperament and institutions is what, for want of a better word, we must designate as Celtic. And the same may be said of Wales, whose ancient connection with Ireland recent research—not to speak of her Mabinogion stories—is showing to be of the most intimate.

What concerns us is not so much the ethnological accuracy of such rough and ready terms as Celt and Saxon, as the fact that in these British Islands the Celtic and English temperaments and ideals are fundamentally different, and that from their blending and mutual repulsion respectively, have arisen no small part of the weal and woe of the two island folk that Nature, that most daring of matchmakers, has joined together.

2

The Celtic Spirit

The student of Irish or Welsh history must have noticed one circumstance that distinguishes it from that of England. In the sense of ordered political development, neither Ireland nor Wales possesses much that is worth calling history before the coming of the Norman. Family rises up against family, and chieftain against chieftain, but there is no such continuous effort to bring order out of chaos as that made by Alfred and his successors, nothing even to compare with the transient greatness of Northumbria. Such a wave of spiritual enthusiasm as swept over Ireland in the sixth and seventh centuries has its effects in the spiritual sphere. But the nation, and even the Church, remains almost as unorganized at its subsidence as at its rise.

The besetting weakness of the Celtic mind, from the days of Caesar down to our own, has been lack of concentration, the least attractive but perhaps the most essential of all the constituents of genius. But here, as in all broad generalizations, it behoves us to tread with caution. We must not forget that Ireland, in her palmy days, produced such scholars as Erigena, such missionaries as Columcille, such a monarch as Brian Boru; we dare not deny the patient industry that must have gone to the making of runic crosses, of illuminated manuscripts, of gold and bronze ornaments, and, to come to our own age, of the holdings which have been forced by almost superhuman exertions to yield increase from a hopeless soil, often, in the end, merely to increase the rent of some non-resident landlord. When we speak, then, of imperfect concentration, we must not be understood to imply mere lack of persistence. What we mean is rather a certain weakness of the synthetic faculty, that deficiency of organizing power which is the gulf fixed between the exquisite and the great.

It has been a perpetual puzzle how the plodding Englishman has succeeded, even in the arts, in overtaking and passing the more sensitive and tasteful Celt. We look in vain around the so-called Fringe for a Shakespeare, a Chaucer, a Spenser, a Milton, a Shelley, a Turner, or a Purcell. There is no one, with the disputable exception of Burns, a Lowland Scot, whom any candid Celt would venture to select from among his compatriots to place on the same level with the least of these masters. And yet romance is in the very breath of the Welsh mountains, of the mournful hills and green plains of Ireland. The people have a poetic felicity of self-expression for which you will seek among the stolid English peasantry and townsfolk in vain.

Psychologically, the case may be put simply enough, if we conceive of all mental processes as passing through three stages; first, impression through the senses, last, realization in action, including all forms of outward expression, and between these a period of varying but appreciable duration during which the brain, like a central office, is busy recognizing the impression, co-ordinating it with others, storing it in the subconsciousness, and determining its outlet in action. It is just this middle or determining stage that the Celtic mind tends to cut short. The transition from thought to action is of excessive quickness. Herein we have the secret of the Celtic charm, and also of the Celtic failure.

The mercurial Irishman or Welshman not unnaturally laughs at the Englishman's slowness. But this very slowness may tend to strength, although, carried to excess, it may be the gravest of handicaps. But at least it gives the chance of building up a rich and well-ordered inner life, and it may impart something of that quality which the Roman knew as *gravitas*, and Emerson as "character". Now *gravitas* would hardly be cited by the most enthusiastic Irish or Welsh patriot as an attained or even a desired quality of his national temperament. He would probably designate it by a less complimentary term. A nice discrimination, a quick sensitiveness, a felicity amounting to brilliance of expression, dash and damnation of the consequences in action, all these are qualities of which he might well be proud and to which he could justly lay claim. These are the fruits of that instant transition from impression to action which we have just described.

Popular satire is not to be despised as an index of national character. It may be, and often is, grossly unfair; the typical Englishman, the Broadbent or Stogumber of Mr. Bernard Shaw, is

about as monstrous an exaggeration as the bull-making, head-thwacking "Pat" of English tradition. But nobody, not even the Society of St. George, would think of describing Tom Broadbent and Sir Gorgius Midas as being in the least like Irishmen, nor, we imagine, would any Irishman call Handy Andy or Micky Free very typical examples of the English temperament. Cant and materialism, awkwardness and lack of discrimination, are charges freely hurled against John Bull; against Pat the accusation is rather one of general irresponsibility, of acting, as a Lowland Scot might say, unadvisedly. The Irish bull is the result of a too quick flow of ideas seeking instant and unco-ordinated expression. When Sir Boyle Roche said: "Mr. Speaker, I smell a rat, I see it hovering in the air before me, but, mark my words, I shall nip it in the bud," he was displaying the very opposite of stupidity. Images were being formed in his mind with kaleidoscopic rapidity, and were hurled into expression without the least pause to judge of their fitness or congruity.

It is not surprising then, that one accomplishment in which the Celt can claim full equality with the Saxon is that of oratory. Few Irishmen or Welshmen have ever been at a loss for words. The names of Burke, Sheridan, Grattan, Flood, Sheil, and Lloyd George are not unworthy rivals to those of Bolingbroke, Chatham, Fox, and Bright. But the Celt is too often the slave and not the master of his words, down the swift flow of his eloquence prudence and even accuracy are swept away. It was not only aristocratic prejudice that kept Burke out of Whig cabinets; and as for Sheridan, we have all heard of that dazzling invective about the Begums, concluding with the orator's deliberate fainting into the arms of Burke, and of Sheridan's subsequent meeting with that very complete Englishman, Warren Hastings, and his airy explanation that of course all he had said against him was not to be taken seriously.

When, therefore, we speak of a lack of concentration as the defect of the Celtic temperament, we are using what is at best a somewhat imperfect word to express a psychological fact which no one word will fit quite exactly. Nor is there anything paradoxical in admitting that such a defect is consistent with unremitting industry. The Arab peoples have shewn how it is possible to combine the utmost patience and minuteness in matters of detail with a transience and brittleness of effort on the grand scale which have left them out-distanced in their long rivalry with Western peoples. It has been remarked, by so penetrating an observer as March Phillips, how

plainly this is revealed in the Saracenic architecture, brilliant but fundamentally unsound, as contrasted with the honesty of Gothic.

Without going too minutely into the question how far other peoples have been mixed with the Celtic stock in these islands, we may remark that our earliest information about the Celts confirms such an estimate of their character. The tribes who rushed down on Rome in the days of Camillus and as suddenly melted away, the Gauls whom no less an observer than Caesar has described for us, are characterized by the same strange combination of brilliance and instability. In attack they are well-nigh irresistible, but they are incapable of sticking out a prolonged struggle, or of constructive political effort. Something of this reproach tradition has allowed to adhere to the French character, but with less than justice, for France, unlike Ireland, has come from the first under the full weight of Roman ideas and Roman discipline, and the iron of that rod has entered into the French soul. Enough of the Celtic fickleness is left, upon the surface, to deceive those whose wish is the father to their judgment, and know not that underneath burn the fires of Verdun. The Irish, on the other hand, are a people who have never come under any discipline save that of oppression. This has produced a hardness, perhaps an invincibility, but of a different order from that of France.

The rapidity of the Celt's mental processes entails a consequence that is natural in itself, and is borne out abundantly by experience. Impressions are translated so quickly into action that they have less than enough opportunity to be stored in the mind. Hence the grip of the Celt upon the outside world is feeble compared with that of the Saxon. He is, in fact, of an intensely subjective nature. The world he lives for, and to which he longs to escape, is one of dreams, and it is the characteristic of dreams that the governing faculty of the mind is in abeyance; dream facts are emotions clothed with the semblance of reality. "The Irish story-teller," says Mr. Yeats, speaking of the ancient epics, "could not interest himself with an unbroken interest in the ways men like himself burned a house or won wives no more wonderful than themselves. His mind constantly escaped out of daily circumstances as a bough that has been held down by a weak hand suddenly straightens itself out . . . His art, too, is often at its greatest when it is most extravagant, for he only feels himself among solid things, among things with fixed laws and satisfying purposes, when he has reshaped the world according to his heart's desire."

Thus it is that from the events of the ancient Irish Chuchulain and Finn epics we never get the same sense of workaday, ding-dong reality that thrills us in the Norse sagas and the Iliad, in Beowulf and the Northumbrian account of St. Andrew. When we read of Ajax defending the ships, and the Thegn of God going forth amongst the heathen, we feel that we are among men with like passions and difficulties to our own, we are even ready to accept the supernatural element of the stories in good faith for the nonce. Beowulf's dragon may not occur in any book of natural history, but he is a genuine dragon for all that, and it is even betting, we guess, whether he or Beowulf is going to get the best of it. But few can have the least illusion of reality when they read of a gigantic man stalking into the hall of Emain Macha, and allowing any hero to cut off his head provided he may take his own turn at decapitation on the following day. The head is duly cut off, whereupon the body picks it up, and walks, with neck spouting blood, out of the room, to join up outside.

In the story of Deirdre, one of the most beautiful, in its tragic poignancy, of any people or time, the action is far less credible than that of most fairy-tales. Conchubar, the old, jealous King, has betrayed the lovers, Deirdre and Naise, son of Usnach, with his brothers, and surrounded them in the house destined for their destruction. First one of the two sons of Fergus, who have accompanied Deirdre and the sons of Usnach, rushes out of the house and kills three-fifths of the King's army, whereupon Conchubar buys him off by the gift of a mountain, which turns bare in a single night on account of that treachery. But the second son, fair-haired Iollan, is made of firmer stuff, he makes three courses round the house, and disposes of three-fifths of the remaining troops. Conchubar then despatches his own son, Fiacra, to fight Iollan. Fiacra is put down and lies beneath his shield; the shield Ochain roars for the greatness of its owner's peril, and the three chief waves of Ireland, the wave of Tuagh, the wave of Cliodna and the wave of Rudriage, roar in response. Far away at Dun Subairce, Conall Cearnach hears the roaring, and hastens to the scene, in time to slay the fair-haired Iollan and deliver Fiacra. After this it seems almost commonplace when the Druid Cathbad raises an imaginary sea which causes the sons of Usnach to swim on dry land, and their swords to drop from their hands.

But these Irish happenings are sober commonsense beside the products of the Welsh imagination, especially as exemplified in the

earlier Mabinogion, those of the tales yet untouched by the spirit of Continental chivalry. The story of Deirdre is at least a work of profound emotional import, and if the artist makes light of reality, it is because he chooses, with full intent, to inhabit a dream world. But such a story as that of Kilhwrch and Olwen is a string of rollicking absurdities, in which only affectation could find anything but the most entertaining of nightmares. Among the many things that Kilhwrch is told to get before he can marry Olwen are a comb, razor and scissors which are to be found between the ears of a big pig with silver bristles, called the Twrch Trwyth. King Arthur, who has obligingly consented to help Kilhwrch, goes over to Ireland with his hosts, his horses and his dogs, to fight the big pig and his seven little pigs. On the first day the Twrch Trwyth vanquishes the dogs and the Irish and lays waste a fifth part of Ireland, on the second day he gets the better of Arthur's household, and for the next nine days and nine nights he and Arthur himself fight continuously without so much as one of the little pigs being killed. Then all the pigs jump into the sea and swim to Wales, and Arthur, with all the warriors that are in the three isles of Britain, and the three islands adjacent, and France, and Normandy, and Brittany and the Summer Country, pursues the hunt with varying fortunes through Wales and the West of England, until he has secured the comb, the razor, and the scissors, and killed all but two of the little pigs, whereupon the survivors, having satisfied honour by the slaughter of the King of France and a good part of Arthur's armies, jump into the sea and are never heard of again.

The difference in spirit between the Welsh and the Irish is probably more due to the nature of their respective countries, than to any distinction between the Brythonic and Goidelic temperament, in so far as these words stand for racial facts. The Welsh are a nation of mountaineers, with the independence and intractability that hillmen naturally develop ; the green hills of Ireland, the softness of her atmosphere, the bogs and misty distances of her central plain, combine to produce a dreamy melancholy, a wistfulness of spirit that animates even heroes, as when Cuchulain and Ferdiad, after fighting and wounding each other all day so that birds can fly through their bodies, rest at evening and each gives the other three kisses. From the dawn of her iron age to the coming of the Danes, Ireland had been subject to no external pressure whatever, whereas the Welsh had first had to submit to a military occupation, and afterwards had had the threat of a warlike and aggressive

alien power constantly on their borders. Wales was therefore less in a condition than Ireland to follow her destinies unimpeded; her tribal feuds were always more or less overshadowed by the threat to her existence. Hence is born a somewhat tougher-fibred, less purely artistic temperament. It is significant that while Ireland was pouring missionaries of the gospel into Britain and the Continent, the Welsh Church held sullenly and proudly aloof from any taint of contact with the Saxon.

The attitude of each people towards reality is what we might expect under these conditions. The Irishman is a rebel, but he is also a fugitive. He flies from the brutality of life into dreams, the Welshman simply rebels against it. Matthew Arnold, who wrote his brilliant essay on the Celtic spirit largely on the strength of what he knew about Wales, made the mistake of generalizing from the Welsh attitude to that of the Celt in general. He cites a fine and typically Welsh poem of Llywarch Hen to his crutch, an old man cursing his lot in the fashion of Job. To this there are enough Irish parallels. But the Irish have also a way of escape like that of St. Brendan, going forth alone in the night on the mountain that now bears his name, seeing the vast and dim ocean spreading all around, and then beholding the fair and excellent vision of a blessed land, far from human ken, with angels hovering over it, or, as the greatest of modern Irish poets has sung :—

> "The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
> The wind blows over the lonely of heart
> And the lonely of heart is withered away,
> While the fairies dance in a place apart . . ."

One point of contact with reality both Irishman and Welshman certainly have in their intense love of nature, and their sympathy, one might almost say their comradeship, with the lower animals. A Welsh patriot bard, moved by the woes of his country, quite naturally addresses every stanza to a little pig, and one of Dafydd ap Gwilym's finest poems is an ode to a fox. Irish saints were great lovers of animals; St. Bridget, when she was cooking bacon for her father, could not refrain from bestowing a goodly portion on a "very hungry, miserable hound" who came and begged for it; St. Patrick stopped some men who were going to kill a fawn and carried the little thing in his arms, the mother running behind; most beautiful of all is the story of St. Columcille's old, white horse, who, perceiving that his master was about to die, came and shed tears into his lap. "Let him alone," murmured the saint, to those who would have driven the horse away, "for he loves me."

Irish nature poetry has a beauty all of its own. There is no looking before nor after, no attempt to penetrate a secret or draw a moral; the poet merely jots down, with exquisite discrimination, just what he sees and feels and leaves it at that:

> "The peat bog is as the raven's coat,
> The loud cuckoo bids welcome,
> The speckled fish leaps,
> Strong is the bound of the swift warrior."[1]

It is enough merely to catalogue these things; they are too lovely and lovable in themselves to need embellishment. The Irish temperament lends itself less to reflection than enjoyment. It is difficult to conceive of an Irish Wordsworth.

Living in a world so largely composed of dreams, it is natural that the Celt should be a believer in all kinds of magic, for the root of magic is the idea that thoughts are things, and that what happens in the mind happens also in the world without. This is not exactly the same as mysticism, which is an intense form of mental discipline. Mysticism proper is more natural to the Englishman than the Celt, as the names of Hylton, Rolle, Lady Julian, Fox and Law bear witness. Magic is the Celt's province. Even in the South-West corner of England, which Egbert conquered, the Celtic nature bewrays itself in the hundreds of ghosts that haunt house and wood, in the bottomless pools, the little men in green, and the local misadventures of His Satanic Majesty with which every lover of Dartmoor must be familiar. Ireland and the Celtic parts of Scotland are still the resort of the good people; the superstition of the Welsh is proverbial. The Nordic priests of Thor and Woden never impress the imagination of mankind in the same way as the awful figure of the Celtic Druid:

> "All things begin and end in Albion's ancient, Druid, rocky shore."

The Celt's swift transition from impression to action carries as a natural consequence an extreme and whole-hearted intensity, though not necessarily a persistence of passion. Anybody who has witnessed a Welsh revival meeting or been in an Irish crowd will realize how utterly the Celt can abandon himself, on the least provocation, to his emotions. He is a great lover, a great hater. Where in all literature can you meet with anything more poignant than the keening of Deirdre over the sons of Usnach:

"Do not break the strings of my heart, as you took hold of my young youth, Conchubar; though my darling is dead, my love is

[1] Kuno Meyer's translation.

strong to live. What is country to me, or land, or lordship? What are swift horses? What are jewels and gold? Och! It is I will be lying tonight on the strand like the beautiful sons of Usnach!" [1]

There is, in the Welsh story of Peredur, the original of Percival, an incident which, if it has not the tragic intensity of Deirdre's keening, at least shows us the Celt in all the beautiful extravagance of his passion. Peredur has arisen with his mind full of the thought of his lady, and as he rides he sees first the new-fallen snow upon the ground, then a bird whom a hawk has killed, and lastly a raven. "And Peredur stood, and compared the blackness of the raven, and the whiteness of the snow, and the redness of the blood, to the hair of the lady whom best he loved, which was blacker than jet, and to her skin which was whiter than snow, and to the two red spots upon her cheeks, which were redder than the blood upon the snow appeared to be." As he muses thus he is accosted by twenty-four knights in succession, and so deep is his meditation that he cannot answer them, but when they attack him he throws each in turn to the ground with one thrust of his lance, and finally overthrows his enemy, Sir Kai, and rides over him twenty-one times without disturbing the train of his meditation. Here is the quintessence of dreaming, but it is a dream whose wings are steeped with unearthly passion and fragrant with winds that are blown out of fairyland.

The Celt has been called melancholy, but so, with equal truth, are the ancient English, a strange instance of the imperfection of words, for love is not more different from hate than Celtic from Saxon melancholy. There is a grave and often heroic resignation about the Saxon; Wyrd is above him, the inexorable destiny, and a man's part is to endure. "The hard helmet decked with gold, must be bereft of its adornments; they sleep who once did brighten it, they who prepared the masks of war. . . There is no joy of the harp, no mirth of the gleewood, no good hawk swinging through the hall, no swift horse beating with his hoof the castle yard. Baleful death hath sent forth many mortals on their way." [2] About this there is no shrinking from reality, no rebellion, just the mournful acceptance of life in all its inexorable sadness. But the Celt, when he is confronted with a reality that contradicts his dreaming, dashes himself against it with a fury that finds vent in titanic imagery, in gestures and actions of unmeasured extravagance.

It is said of Conchubar that he had been desperately wounded

[1] Lady Gregory's translation.
[2] From *Beowulf*, Mr. C. B. Tinker's translation.

in the head, and was told that, in order to save his life, he must keep quiet and refrain from anger. This he did for seven years, but on one Friday he beheld the sun and moon darkened at mid-day, and was told that at this very hour Jesus Christ was being crucified. Forthwith the old pagan King burst into a terrible cry of grief and rage:

"It is with Christ my help would be; a wild shout going out; the keening of a full lord, a full loss . . . beautiful the fight I would make for Christ that is defouled, I would not rest although my own body was tormented . . . I would go to death for his safety, it crushes my heart to hear the outcries and the lamentations." [1]

Forthwith he rushed out with his sword, and began hacking the branches of an oakwood, since there were no Jews at hand on whom his vengeance might be wreaked. And in so doing he opened the old wound in his head, and fell lifeless among the trees.

That is the Celtic melancholy, we should rather call it the Celtic revolt against all the brutality and ugliness of things, all that makes the world we see different from the world we dream. The evil thing may be as inexorable as death, it may be as high as God's throne—that is no reason for accepting it. St. Patrick may tell Oisin how his companions, the Fianna, are lying on the flagstone of pain. The old hero merely replies:

"It would be a great shame for God not to take the locks of pain off Finn; if God himself were in bonds my King would fight for His sake. Finn left no one in pain or in danger . . . for the sake of your love, Patrick, do not forsake the great men; bring in the Fianna unknown to the King of Heaven." [2]

It is that selfsame melancholy that drove forth Brendan into unknown seas to seek the Blessed Island, that has made the Celt in all ages the adventurer on forlorn hopes, the despiser of odds. He does not count the forces of reality. So it was when Kilhwrch replied to every miracle dared him by Yspadaden Penkawr; "it will be easy for me to compass this, although you may think it will not be easy," so it was when Conolly and his Dublin mob dared defy the whole might of an Empire in arms. No wonder that of such people it has been said, "They always went forth to battle, and they always died."

[1] Lady Gregory's translation.
[2] Ib.

3

Christianity and Scholarship

It is a proof of the astonishing vitality and energy of spiritual Rome that, at a time when the temporal Empire was bleeding to death from the assaults of Huns and Vandals, the Church was actually pushing her war of conquest into regions to which neither the Cross nor the Eagles had ever yet penetrated. Ireland, given over to nature symbolism and luxuriant magic, might prove not unresponsive to the gospel message reinforced, so it was faithfully believed, by supernatural powers more than a match for those of the mightiest druid.

But the fire was not to kindle into a blaze at the first lighting. The missionary Palladius, sent from Gaul in 431, seems to have departed or died without achieving any widespread conversion. But in the next year arrived the man of genius whose name will forever be linked with Irish Christianity. Patrick was a West-country Briton of respectable parentage who had been kidnapped during one of the Irish raids and served a term of slavery, escaping finally to Gaul, and serving his apprenticeship in sainthood in the island monastery of Lerins. He appears to have been a man of comparatively little book learning, but of extraordinary tact and personal magnetism, coupled with a sweetness of disposition whose fragrance still lingers round his memory.

Patrick lost no time in striving for merely local successes. Nothing would satisfy him but to establish Christianity at the court of the High King, one Loigaire, a pagan who was possessed, unlike most of those with whom the Church had to deal, with an invincible loyalty to the faith of his fathers. It was the feast of Beltane, which the story, with some wrenching of dates, makes to coincide with Easter Day. On that night it was death to light any fire except the King's fire. But when darkness had descended, the King and his courtiers, in the palace of Tara, saw far away over the Plain of Breg the flicker of a fire. It was the challenge of Christianity, the Paschal fire that Patrick had kindled in honour of his risen Lord. So the Druids told the King that unless that fire was put out before daybreak, it would never be put out at all. Accordingly King, courtiers and the druids mounted their chariots and drove off in the night across the ten miles that separated them from the Hill of Slane, circling widdershins in order to defeat the newcomer's

incantations. Then the White Magic of Christianity was pitted against the Black Magic of druidism throughout that night of wonders, until Loigaire, still unconverted, was fain to acknowledge defeat.

Such was the coming of Christianity as seen through the mirror of Irish imagination, though another and earlier account suggests that the contest was rather one of words than of magic, and that what most affected Loigaire was the fear lest the levelling tendencies of the new faith should lead to a confounding of social ranks. But he respected the personality even while he rejected the message of Patrick, and allowed the missionary a free hand, while remaining constant himself to the faith of his fathers which even he must have recognized as a lost cause.

Patrick had some of the faculty, possessed by that other great missionary organizer, Saint Paul, of becoming all things to all men. He was no Wilfrid or Augustine, to force the whole of Roman discipline upon the Irish tribes. He saw that even Rome must modify her demands upon a people that had never felt the yoke of the Caesars. Family and clan feeling was too strong to admit of effective centralization. Accordingly, the Irish Church came to be organized, or rather unorganized, on lines that by Roman or Gallic or even British standards were nothing less than anarchic. The monastic life was the one that appealed most to the ardent, Irish nature, and the monasteries were usually attached to particular family or tribal units, and consisted of little groups of ascetic individualists, living apart in stone or wattle cells, clustered together rather like the huts of a Kaffir kraal, with perhaps an encircling palisade, and a rather larger but still primitive building which served for occasional common worship. Outside the monasteries prevailed an ecclesiastical chaos. The fatal practice was started—whether by Patrick or his successors is uncertain—of appointing bishops without sees, with the result that the Irish Church soon became afflicted by a veritable plague of these mitred unemployed, and it was nearly a thousand years after Patrick's death before the celibacy of the clergy could be enforced.

It is easy to understand the enthusiasm with which the Irish rushed into the arms of Christianity. To them it was the realization of their fairest dreams; the Kingdom of Heaven was within them as it never was in the subjects of the Roman discipline. Christ was a reality as palpable as that of a friend, "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ under me, Christ over me, Christ to the right of me, Christ to the left of me, Christ

in lying down, Christ in sitting, Christ in rising up, Christ in the heart of everyone that thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone that speaks to me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me "—with such passion of faith did the great Patrick invoke his Saviour, when his enemies were lying in ambush for him. And the story runs that all they saw passing by was a wild deer and its fawn, Patrick's servant.

Love is the keynote of this Irish Christianity; the hardness that expressed itself elsewhere in persecutions and bitter controversies had not yet penetrated to the Green Island. It was a love that included everything in its scope; Saint Bridget, when she was not giving to the dogs would be giving to the poor; as for the holy Maling, he could be so courteous to the Devil himself as to draw a tribute of rhapsodic admiration from that "man of tribulations". There is no more adorable figure than that of the hermit, seated in his woodland shieling, in frank and ecstatic enjoyment of the life and beauty around him:

"Around it tame swine lie down,
Goats, pigs,
Wild swine, grazing deer,
A badger's brood.

"A peaceful troop, a heavy host of denizens of the soil,
A trysting at my house:
To meet them foxes come,
How delightful!" [1]

Thus the Irish Church, however much it may have suffered from its lack of centralized organization, went far to compensate for it in the richness and intensity of its inner life. It was as monks or hermits that the Irish found the most congenial outlet for their individualism. They went forth to spread their gospel in the wildest lands as cheerfully as St. Brendan had gone to find the blessed island. And along with Christianity Ireland embraced learning. It was as if, in the very acquisition of knowledge, her sons could find that escape from reality which they were always seeking. Her schools, collections of huts clustered together within the precincts of some monastic community, became famous throughout Europe, and scholars flocked to Ireland from all parts, sure of a courteous and hospitable welcome.

It was during the sixth and seventh centuries, as Dollinger [2] informs us, that "the Church of Ireland stood in the full beauty

[1] Kuno Meyer's translation. [2] Quoted by Newman.

of its bloom. The spirit of the gospel operated amongst the people with a vigorous and vivifying power; troops of holy men, from the highest to the lowest ranks of society, obeyed the counsel of Christ, and forsook all things that they might follow Him. There was not a country in the world, during this period, which could boast of pious foundations or of religious communities equal to those that adorned this far-distant island. The schools in the Irish cloisters were at this time the most celebrated in the West; and in addition to those which have been already mentioned, there flourished the schools of St. Finian of Clonard, founded in 530, and those of Cataldus, founded in 640. Whilst almost the whole of Europe was desolated by war, peaceful Ireland, free from the invasions of external foes, opened to the lovers of learning and piety a welcome asylum."

The spirit of Irish scholarship found its highest, and at the same time its most characteristic expression in the philosophy of John Scotus Erigena, who flourished in the early ninth century, and many of the details of whose life are wrapped in the mists of legend. In one story that is told of him the essential Irishman (then called Scot) is unmistakably revealed. He was sitting at table opposite the French King, Charles the Bald, and the latter, with that heavy badinage, so characteristic of persons in authority from monarchs down to ushers, enquired, as nearly as we can bring out the point in a translation: "What divides a Scot from a sot?" "Only a table," was the innocent reply, surely with some primitive touch of the brogue. Erigena possesses quite the most original intellect of his time, and until the coming of Abelard he stands unrivalled in Europe. The discipline of Rome has produced no more effect on his mind than on those of his compatriots. He is less of a Catholic than an unconscious Hindu, and indeed, when we approach the study of India, we note a striking similarity between the two extreme outposts of Aryan civilization. A pope, four centuries after his time, branded Erigena's opinions, with more insight than elegance, as swarming with worms of heretical perversity, a compliment which reminds us of Luther's reference to the *lousiness* of the Papal doctrines.

Like a Hindu, Erigena builds up his universe entirely out of his own mind, with but the shadowiest reference either to the facts of life, or, what is more remarkable, to those theological dogmas which were the support and the dungeon of the later schoolmen. Like Brahma, he dreams the universe, and an astonishingly modern universe it is. It is avowedly to be apprehended not by authority

but by reason; the Persons of the Trinity are refined into abstract principles as thoroughly as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva in the mind of an educated Brahman. Above all, it is a kindly universe; the awful dogmas of Hell and original sin are explained away as thoroughly as anyone could, at the time, without being dispatched to find out for himself. Hell is a symbol, sin merely nothingness that the unenlightened think to be something—the Hindu Maya. In the end all things, even the devils, return to that eternal peace, passing understanding, that neither creates nor is created, that which is at once nothing and everything, call it God or Nirvana.

Here we cannot refrain from quoting one of the most inspired passages of that supreme thinker and stylist, an Englishman who loved Ireland, John Henry Newman:

"Distinct, nay antagonistic, in character and talent, the one nation and the other, Irish and English, the one more resembling the Greek [no, not the Greek, with his essential materialism, but the Hindu, with whom the Cardinal of St. George was but little acquainted], the other the Roman, open from the first perhaps to jealousies as well as rivalries, they consecrated their respective gifts to the Almighty Giver, and, labouring together for the same great end, they obliterated whatever there was of human infirmity in their mutual intercourse by the merit of their common achievements. Each by turn could claim the predominance in the contest of sanctity and of learning. In the schools of science, England has no name to rival Erigena in originality, or St. Virgil in freedom of thought; nor among canonized women any saintly virgin to compare with St. Bridget; nor, although it has 150 saints in its calendar, can it pretend to equal that Irish multitude which the Book of Life alone is large enough to contain. Nor can Ireland, on the other hand, boast of a doctor such as St. Bede, or of an apostle equal to St. Boniface, or of so long a catalogue of royal devotees as that of the thirty male and female Saxons who in the course of two centuries resigned their crowns, or as the roll of twenty-three kings, and sixty queens and princes, who, between the seventh and eleventh centuries gained a place among the saints. Yet, after all, the Irish, whose brilliancy of genius has sometimes been considered, like the Greek, to augur fickleness and change, have managed to persevere to this day in the science of the saints, long after their ancient rivals have lost the gift of faith." [1]

Though the Church of Wales had a goodly record of saints,

[1] From *The Idea of a University*, ch. x.

and can boast of schools like that of St. Illtyd, its Christianity can hardly be said to have had a bloom and a fervour like that of Ireland. The legends of its saints are sometimes repulsive, like that of the Breton Illtyd, who alone out of a whole hunting party failed to be swallowed up by ground that the ownership of St. Cadoc had rendered taboo, or merely grotesque, like that of the patron saint, David, who is said to have owed his archbishopric to his success in a singular episcopal competition at the synod of Brefi. Having decided to reject the Pelagian heresy, each of the good prelates in turn got up upon a heap of clothes, and strained his lungs to bawl the news to all the assembled multitude. None succeeded, until, by the advice of the aged Paulinus, David was sent for. The story is of course apocryphal, the archbishop is an anachronism, and if the Welsh crowd had been kept waiting about until David had arrived, other things would have happened. These Welsh legends breathe a very different spirit from that of the pure and fervent Christianity of men like Patrick and Columcille.

Welsh Christianity was already old at the time when Patrick was spreading the Good News in Ireland. Its brightest ornament was Gildas, a scholar and the nearest approach to a historian that Wales can show for long centuries. This obviously sincere and disinterested Churchman takes a depressing view of his country's state and prospects. He is as much of a patriot as the prophets of ancient Israel, and his object is to

> Show each wound, each weakness clear,
> To strike his finger on the place,
> And say, thou ailest here, and here!

In his opinion, the tide of invasion that has borne back the Britons into their mountain fastnesses has been due to the tyranny and lusts of their various Kings, and to the worldliness and depravity of their clergy. Making all allowance for prophetic exaggeration, it is difficult, on reading this terrible and detailed indictment, to believe that it can be wholly without foundation, or that Christianity in Wales was in a particularly healthy condition at the time when Gildas wrote.

4

Welsh and Irish Nationality

One weakness of the Celtic temperament lay in its incapacity for organization. For patient, constructive effort the Celt, with his dreamy nature, and his quick transition from impression to

deed, is but poorly equipped. We see English sovereigns like Alfred and Edgar, slowly and painfully building up a fabric of law and ordered government. Hardly anything of this kind takes place in either Wales or Ireland. Such a King as Howel the Good will, indeed, codify the Welsh traditional laws, but he is able to establish no machinery for their enforcement. The social unit is, and remains, the family; the state only exists in embryo.

Wales, indeed, is less primitive in this respect than Ireland, which is what we should naturally expect, considering that she has passed under the Roman sway, and that she is perpetually threatened by a powerful and ambitious enemy, anxious for her subjugation and harassing her with raids from behind the shelter of his dyke. The King, or rather the local chief, differed, as Professor Lloyd has well pointed out, from the Kings of Ireland, in that he set out to enforce justice, as interpreted by the court of his "cantref", in person and by force of arms. Theft was punished by death, though, by a merciful Christian provision, beggars who had stolen after starving three days were let off. The King's power to make himself respected lay in his body of private retainers, often a little band of not more than a hundred men, but generally the most formidable force in his dominions.

For all this, the Welsh do not seem to have taken kindly to the idea of law. "They never," says Giraldus Cambrensis, writing as late as the twelfth century, "scruple at taking a false oath for the sake of any temporary emolument or advantage; so that in civil and ecclesiastical causes, each party, being ready to swear whatever seems expedient to its purpose, endeavours both to prove and defend, although the venerable laws, by which oaths are deemed sacred, and truth is honoured and respected, by favouring the accused and throwing an odium on the accuser, impose the burden of bringing proofs upon the latter. But to a people so cunning and crafty, this yoke is pleasant and this burden is light." Nor was perjury their only besetting weakness, according to Giraldus, for he informs us that no people is so much addicted to the digging up of boundary ditches, the removal of landmarks, and, in fact, every kind of land-grabbing. This is no doubt accounted for by facts being, in Professor Lloyd's words, "in an early Welsh court, often quite subordinate to status, and the mere will of a landowner of 'higher privilege' was enough to give effect to his desire to extend his boundaries at the expense of a less privileged neighbour."

The fact is that family feeling seems to have been so strong

among the Welsh that it was almost impossible to superimpose effectually any higher units such as the State. Giraldus remarks—what must have struck anybody with Welsh friends to-day—that they are inordinately proud of their birth and pedigrees. Their vendettas were therefore of Corsican fierceness, and impersonal to the extent that a brother, who had been hated and persecuted during life, would be avenged after death. Had they only been able to unite effectually, the Welsh might have been invincible among their mountains, for they were all trained to arms and brave fighters, though with the traditional unsteadiness of the Celt. But there was no tendency to unite or set up any form of national organization, except when Roderick the Great so far pulled the nation together as actually to make the beginning of a navy. But when he was killed, the whole fabric fell to pieces again, and the best that could be attained was a nominal supremacy of some chief, that could only by courtesy be entitled government.

But there is no deeper fallacy than that which confounds national with political unity. Little Wales, for all her faults and all her instability, was truly a nation. An unmistakable sign of patriotic feeling is contained in the legend of a common and honourable origin. The Britons, according to their Welsh remnant, were descended from the Trojans who had fled from Troy with Brutus. For their sins they had been driven into the West, but no less an authority than Merlin had prophesied that they should possess their land again. The great figure of Arthur was dimly shaping itself out of the mists of the past as the ideal, patriot King. An old Welshman was bold enough to tell King Henry II that though his nation might be harassed, it could never be finally subdued. "Nor do I think that any other nation than this of Wales, or any other language, whatever may hereafter come to pass, shall, in the day of severe examination before the Supreme Judge, answer for this corner of the earth." Or, as Taliesin sings :—

"Their Lord they will praise,
Their speech they will keep,
Their land will they lose,
Except wild Wales.

Till some change shall come,
After long penance,
When equally ripe
The two crimes come.

Britons then shall have
Their land and their crown,
And the stranger swarm
Shall disappear."

In Ireland we find even less political unity than in Wales. Between the last Celtic and the first Danish invasion, the Irish, unthreatened from without, had no incentive to build up a central government above the ancient tribal organization. There was, indeed, an Ardri or High King with a domain in Meath, and certain rights to tribute that he might enforce if he could. The result, when a King of Leinster was in question, was an armed raid, which every Ardri was bound in honour to undertake, and which ended in a pitched battle, involving, as likely as not, the High King's death. Irish political history is a monotonous record of raids and family feuds, with little apparent purpose except that of driving off cattle, maintaining some point of family honour, or gratifying the Irishman's traditional love of a row. These wars were generally decided by one battle and the death of at least one leader, since it was dishonourable to survive a defeat.

If Ireland was disunited politically she had two bonds of union in her law and her national sentiment. Irish law was even more lacking in formal sanctions that that of Wales. In the earliest times any learned man appears to have been qualified to act as judge, but in process of time the privilege was restricted to "brehons" who had a regular training in the law. The brehon, like the umpire at cricket, gave his decision when appealed to, but it is a moot question whether he had any means of enforcing it except the pressure of public opinion. Mrs. Green,[1] indeed, holds that the judges had the power of swift and severe punishment, but she relies largely on what seems a mere speculation that many of the battles recorded by chroniclers arose out of the enforcement of justice, which even if it were to be established, would prove no more than that a King had as hazardous an adventure in enforcing a law as in extracting a tribute. But, as she pertinently indicates, for a man to set himself in open defiance of the brehons was to involve losing his honour-price and status in a country where status was all in all, and such contumacy was probably unthinkable in practice to any but the most hardened characters.

The basis of Irish law was the family, and the union of families in the Tuath or clan, usually tracing its descent to a common ancestor. This was no doubt much the same as with the Anglo-Saxon invaders of England, but they, in their utilitarian way, showed a capacity for grouping themselves in artificial units that the Irishman neither possessed nor desired. To him family feeling was,

[1] In *The History of the Irish State to* 1014, ch. 12.

and is still, far more powerful than with the Englishman, so strong, in fact, that not till after centuries of English domination was it possible for Ireland to evolve a national as distinct from a clan polity.

It may be said with some justice that the weakness of Ireland as a nation has lain in her indurated clannishness, which has had a similar effect in retarding national development to that which psychoanalysts tell us is produced by an inordinate love for a parent on the growing youth or maiden. Even the Church had to fit her organization into the all-pervading tribal framework, which was proof against the centralizing discipline of Rome. Every man had his place in a complicated hierarchy of social ranks culminating in an intensely proud and clan-conscious nobility. Add to this a law of succession that seemed as if it were specially designed to foster vendettas.

The nearest approach to national organization was provided by the great assemblies which were held from time to time, and at which the laws were publicly recited. They were also the occasion of athletic sports and every kind of conviviality. At the yearly fair at Telltown all the people, without distinction of class or sex, were qualified to attend. Still more important was the triennial assembly in the great hall at Tara, over which the High King presided, and which was attended by all the aristocracy of birth and learning. Its special object was to preserve intact, or modify if necessary, the law of the land. " This then is my foster-mother," says an ancient sage, quoted by Mrs. Green, " the island in which ye are, even Ireland, and the familiar knee of this island is the hill on which ye are, namely Tara."

The unity of ancient Ireland is of a kind which the practical Saxon, brought up in the Roman and Norman tradition, finds it impossible to understand, and this very failure has been the prime cause of the tragedy which has dogged Anglo-Irish relations. To the English invader the Brehon Law was a " damnable law which is no law, hateful to God and man ", and in our own century we find such a scholar and statesman as Lord Balfour solemnly arguing against the sentiment of Irish nationality with the lamentable sneer that " Ireland has never been deprived of her national organization, for she never possessed one ". But the unity of Ireland was one of the spirit, and it is even more wrong to deny it than it is to sentimentalize over it, and exaggerate its possibilities for good. It was at any rate a lovely and wonderful aspect of this unity that

in an age of incessant war, poets and learned men could go about without let or hindrance, that even before Christianity the Irish loved and respected learning. National sentiment was fostered, also, at the great assemblies by the recitation of history, and if the Welsh bard could write of his people " their speech they will keep ", pride in his native tongue was equally the mark of an Irishman.

How intense Irish national sentiment could be, we may realize from reading Columcille's greeting to Ireland, which, though Mr. Kuno Meyer ascribes it to the eleventh century is, whatever its real authorship, one of the most inspired patriotic poems in all literature. The Irishman loves Ireland as he loves nature, he catalogues, in unadorned detail, just those persons and places that are too dear in themselves to need the adornments of epithet or imagery. He dwells upon Loch Lene and upon Lenny, upon the clerics and the birds and the oaks and the sloes, upon sweet Brendan and Comgall of eternal life. And then, as his thoughts come home to Derry, with its crowd of white angels from one end to the other, he cries in a supreme access of love :

" My Derry, my little oak-grove,
My dwelling and my little cell,
O living God that art in Heaven above,
Woe to him who violates it ! " [1]

5

The Norse Invasions and Brian Boru

The first awakening from that external peace which had favoured the brightest days of Irish civilization, came from Viking Northmen, those eminently practical and businesslike adventurers whom it required all the heroism of Alfred to hold in check, and who conquered England, in the long run, as well as Normandy. But Ireland they failed to conquer. They were confronted with the same difficulty that baffled Napoleon in Spain ; they were attacking a social organism in a low stage of development. For the Irish were without towns, without coined money, and without any organized system of national defence. Above all, they had no sort of a navy, the most necessary means of defence against seafarers for an island people. But the mere fact of there being a number of families or tribes united only by spiritual bonds made their complete conquest a matter of infinite difficulty. Every single tribe had to be conquered in detail ; there was no heart of the nation

[1] Kuno Meyer's translation.

at which you could strike, no Alfred nor Harold to concentrate a national levy which, if finally beaten, would leave the country naked to conquest. And so the Danes planted their towns and ravaged all over the country, but it was, as Mr. Holland Rose said of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, like a sword-slash through a pond.

At last came the supreme crisis, and a national hero, in the shape of Brian Boru, or Brian of the Tribute, who, from being head of a local dynasty in Munster, arose first to be King of that province, and then, with an army largely composed of Danes, managed to oust Maelsechlainn, the hereditary High King, from Tara, and to seize the High Kingship himself, with some idea of providing Ireland with the centralized government she lacked.

It was a critical time, for during Brian's supremacy England was conquered by Sweyn and Canute, and a great Northern Empire extended from the Baltic to Land's End. It was natural that the Danish imperialists should entertain the same prejudice against a free Ireland on their flank as Agricola, and accordingly when the Danish settlement of Dublin was threatened, Danes flocked to its defence from all parts, even as far as the distant Orkneys.

The decisive battle was joined upon the shore at Clontarf. The army of Brian was the nearest approach to a national army that Ireland ever raised, but even so it consisted only of the hosts of Munster and Connaught, with the doubtful support of Maelsechlainn and his host of Meath; the North held sullenly aloof, and Leinster was in alliance with the enemy. All day the fight raged, and Brian, too old to fight, remained praying in his tent, and watching the standard of his son Murtagh as it floated above the thickest of the fight. At last it fell, and "Ireland is fallen with it!" cried the King in utter despair. Then, even as the enemy ranks were breaking in ruin before the Irish charge, a Danish Earl, flying from the field, rushed into the tent and slew Brian. But the dream of a Northern Empire was shattered for ever.

It is difficult to speak of Brian as a patriot, in the sense that we use the word of Alfred. His policy had been consistently in the interests of his own family, and by supplanting the High King he had ruined the last hope of any effective political union by making the High Kingship the prize of any successful adventurer; though he vanquished the Danish host at Clontarf, he had not scrupled to enlist Danes in his service against Irishmen, and against his own sovereign. If Clontarf averted the immediate danger, it left Ireland fatally weak, and even more anarchic than before. The Danes

remained in their fortified towns along the coast, open gates into Ireland for a yet more formidable invader of their own blood. And yet, if we hesitate to give Brian Boru the title of patriot, we can hardly deny him that of hero. Irishmen of all ages will think with pride upon the glory of Clontarf, nor will they readily expunge from their hearts those words of the great King : " It is not hereditary with us to submit."

CHAPTER IV

NORMAN CIVILIZATION

1

The Vikings

The slowness of thought and imagination, that clogged the wheels of Anglo-Saxon civilization, might have proved ruinous had it not been for the infusion of blood and energy from the North-East that began towards the end of the eighth century and culminated at that most familiar of all dates, 1066. We are apt to make too absolute a distinction between the two conquests, Danish and Norman, to regard the French-speaking followers of Duke William as essentially Frenchmen. There is, of course, a certain element of truth in such a view; William's host included many feudal adventurers and a majority of troops who were not Norman at all; the original inhabitants of Normandy had blended with their conquerers to an undeterminable extent; but the nucleus of that proud aristocracy which held down England only to weld her into a puissant and united nation were in blood and character Northmen, whatever elements of French and Roman culture they may, characteristically enough, have assimilated.

Normandy itself, we must remember, was long divided into a Western, conservative half, staunch to the old Danish traditions, looking for support to the Danish connection, and an Eastern half, centring in Rouen and Évreux, receptive of French and Roman ideas, progressively Christian, and covered with monasteries that looked to the South for a market for their wool. The close ties of friendship that united the Norman Dukes with the ducal and royal French House of Capet greatly strengthened this tendency, but it was only during the dukedom of the Conqueror himself that the battle between the two cultures was finally decided in a sort of confused tilting match at Val-ès-Dunes, and a united, Catholic and Latinized Normandy came definitely into being. But it was the Danish blood and the Danish spirit that received and interpreted that culture, and it was the successor of Guthrum and Canute who

brought it to England at Pevensey. To lose sight of this fact is to miss the whole significance of the Norman conquest.

The Northmen, somewhat misleadingly designated as Danes, who were the terror of Europe during the ninth and tenth centuries, were of the same Nordic stock as the Anglo-Saxons—parts of the Beowulf story reappear in the sagas—like them they were seafaring, sea-loving adventurers, with a practical, independent spirit, and a religion which did not sit too heavily upon them. But between Northman and Saxon there is a difference of spirit which, though subtle, has been decisive of much in our history. Bede and Alfred are as unmistakably Saxons as Olaf Tryggveson and Gunnar of the saga are Danes. *The Lament of Deor* and *The Wanderer* could never have emanated from one of the Norse Scalds.

The temperament of the Anglo-Saxon was of a reflective earnestness, with melancholy seldom far below the surface. The Norseman is less prone to meditation; he is of a harder and keener temper, ruthlessly efficient, storming along joyously from action to action, with a super-abundant energy that makes inaction a torture. Nor was it only in fighting that this energy was expended. The Vikings were not only fighters but traders; they were, in fact, as canny as the legendary Aberdonian about money. In the story of Burnt Njal we read how Thorarin comes over to obtain the atonement-money for his brother Glum, who has been murdered. It is pointed out, however, that atonement has been done already by the slaying of the murderer, and at that, says the saga, Thorarin thought that the matter had taken a bad turn. Bargaining and haggling over dowries and blood feuds is everywhere rife in the saga stories. There is a touch of the modern advertizer in Eric the Red, who dubbed his new-discovered land "Greenland" because, he said, there was nothing like a good name to attract people thither.

It is perhaps the habit of travelling and trading in all parts of the known and some of the unknown world that accounts for the Viking's extraordinary adaptability. He is at home bargaining with grave and bearded Moslems whose caravan terminus he has reached at Trebizond by way of the long, Russian rivers; he takes service, as body-guard, with the Byzantine Emperor; he becomes, in Sicily, first the conqueror and then the mainstay of the Pope; he marches up the slope of Senlac to the strains of the *Chanson de Roland.*

In temperament the Norseman is almost the exact opposite of the Celt. He is the complete realist. Old Irish literature softens the facts of life in an atmosphere of dreams, but the Norseman of

the sagas demands the facts, in all their starkness, set down as tersely and exactly as possible. Such a hero as Cuchulain, such impossible happenings as preceded the death of the sons of Usnach, would have struck the Viking as incredible nonsense. His fights had to be the real thing, his very heroes credible. For all his strength and struggles Grettir is tied up by the farmers; the last sea fight of Olaf Tryggveson, in the Long Snake, comes home to us as vividly as that which Admiral Cradock fought against odds equally hopeless, and in the same spirit, that it was better to perish gloriously than prudently to decline a fight. The very ghosts are as solid and tangible as the men, and equally mortal, for Grettir kills Glam's spook in good, stand-up fight. It is this straining after the bare truth that makes the sagas models of the storytellers' craft; so, we feel, it must have happened, and no whit otherwise. It may not be altogether fanciful to trace to the Danish element in our ancestry the genius for fiction that has been so conspicuously displayed by the English of modern times. We cannot imagine a more perfect sentence, because of its entire simplicity, for starting off a story than this, with which the Laxdaela saga commences—"Ketill Flatnose was the name of a man."

The Viking is too much of a man of action for any great spiritual fervour. It is difficult to imagine him brooding, like the Northumbrian Thegn, upon the riddle of life and death. Olaf's (the Saint Olave of our London Churches) conversion of the heathen Bondi is curiously like that of Paulinus's conversion of Edwin's court, only with the tender and reflective element left out. An idol of Thor is brought into the assembly. Olaf diverts the attention of the heathen to the rising sun, while a faithful companion fetches Thor a smashing blow with his axe. The assembly breaks up in panic, but Olaf gets them back again, and puts it to them that Thor is plainly no good, and that they may as well adopt his God, which is unanimously agreed upon.

The Viking was, in fact, never more businesslike than in his dealings with the gods, and was quite capable of running with the Christian hare and hunting with the hounds of Valhalla, by the simple expedient of enrolling himself as a catechumen, or a pupil, not actually baptized, but with a view to future baptism, when amongst his Christian customers.

This is by no means to say that the Viking is incapable of piety after his own fashion. He makes little difficulty in picking up the religion of any nation on whom he may happen to have quartered

himself, and once having adopted it, is likely to become its most formidable champion. He is, however, religious in a very irreligious way. Canute was as ready to murder a brother-in-law or mutilate a hostage as he was to row to shore and hear the monks of Ely sing. Norman religiousness was equally efficient and unspiritual; Roger Guiscard sacking Rome to help Pope Hildebrand, Thurstan enforcing his abbacy of Glastonbury by a shower of arrows upon the unfortunate Saxon monks.

The same spirit that made the Northman a worldling in matters of religion, conduced to his being a formalist in matters of law. The Icelandic sagas, where we see him at his purest and best, shew that the average Norse gentleman's principal interest in life, next to fighting, is in the periodical Things or assemblies to which he rides. He is intensely litigious, and has hardly the least idea of abstract justice. The decision turns less upon the merits of the case, than upon the amount of pressure that can be brought to bear upon the scald who declares the law. Primitive as this law was, the folk at the Thing displayed a capacity for hair-splitting and legal quibbling which augured a potential susceptibility to the finer shades of jurisprudence, and might under favourable circumstances give birth to a legal system more vigorously individualistic, if far more tangled, than that of Rome herself.

For the Norseman was a mighty individualist. It was long before he could be brought to bow to any sort of authority. The causes of the Viking movement are by no means simple, but what did more to stimulate it than anything else was the fact that Harold Fairhair, in the ninth century, was impelled, partly, it is said by the beautiful termagent with whom he was in love, to unite the whole of Norway under one government. He had vowed not to cut his hair until this was done, and for ten years fought desperately both for his bride and his coiffure. He conquered, but with such an effect upon the untameable Norsemen, that there was danger of his realm being depopulated. Many of the sturdiest sea-rovers settled in Iceland, each on his own independent farmstead; many more sought their luck in lands already inhabited, such as Britain, France and Ireland. And yet the same Viking, who chafed at all governmental restraint, could be loyal to the death to a leader he respected, and was amenable to that best of all discipline which is based upon independence. Of such qualities is born the capacity for organization.

2

The Viking Influence

Such were the men who conducted three successive invasions and two conquests of England. It is probable that we derived most new blood from their first invasion. The Vikings of Harold Fairhair's and Alfred's time were folk, like the old Saxon pirates, who wished not only to plunder but also to migrate. By the time of Sweyn and Canute, that impulse had spent itself; there was room enough for the Northmen in their own country, and England was valuable for what could be got out of it. Canute himself was scarcely more of a conqueror than William of Orange; he enjoyed, from the first, considerable support in the country, and he had the sense to send back all his Scandinavian troops, except his bodyguard, and rule peacefully as the successor of Alfred. There were probably few Englishmen who did not esteem themselves better off under him than under the "Redeless Ethelred." And Canute turned out to be as able, as pious and as patriotic a sovereign as Athelstan or Edgar.

The influence of the pre-Norman Danes on England was two-fold. They brought new blood into the land, a sterner, keener spirit—they did something to correct the sluggishness of imagination which was the great defect of the Saxon. Even now, we find that those Wessex lands which received the least Danish infusion are peopled by a more sluggish, though perhaps, as Mr. Belloc might say, a kindlier and wiser race than that which peoples the old Northumbrian Kingdom, which came to be the stronghold of Danish power.

Again, the coming of the Danes was a stimulus to the first beginning of trade, and consequently of town life. The Nordic peoples did not take kindly to town-dwelling and the Saxons, in particular, appear to have deliberately avoided the old Roman towns they captured. But the Danes were not only warriors, but tradesmen, and trade, even of the most primitive, tends to the formation of towns, particularly at the ports and harbours where it enters the Kingdom. The five Danish boroughs in the midlands were compact and well organized communities. It is after the Danish invasions that London comes to assume the importance it has retained ever since. "Malmesbury," says Green, "speaks of London as having become half barbarized at this time by the abundance of its Danish inhabitants; their influence is shown by the conversion

of its Portmanninot into a Husting, while the churches of St. Magnus and St. Olave at either end of the bridge suggest that the steep slope down into the river along which Thames Street runs on either side Walbrook, as well as the similar slope across the water, were both peopled by Northmen at about this period," i.e. the reign of Canute. We must remember, too, that, it was the Danes who built the first Irish ports along the East Coast.

Gradually the almost complete economic isolation of Saxon England was being broken down. The ports of the West Coast, particularly Bristol and Chester, carried on a brisk but infamous trade, largely in slaves of both nations, with the Danish ports of Ireland. Here the Danes acted as middlemen. York, accessible to the seacraft of these days, became a flourishing depot for the trade of the North, and London was beginning to feel the advantages of its unique commercial position, both as the most convenient port for ships arriving from East and South-East, and as standing at the entrance to our most important river, at the nodal point of the principal roads. As early as Edgar's reign, we hear of the first settlement of German merchants, men from Cologne, thus linking up England with the great European trade routes by the Danube to Constantinople and over the Alpine passes into Italy.

As yet, however, this trade was of the most meagre. England had next to nothing for sale in the way of manufactured goods; raw wool, especially from monastic pastures, metals and hides formed the principal articles of export. Imports, as we learn from the colloquies of Aelfric, consisted of a few costly and easily portable commodities, such as gems, ivory, silks, wine, and oil. This is not surprising when we think of the risks and difficulties of transit, and the fact that inland trade was conducted by chapmen with pack animals, travelling in considerable bodies for the sake of safety, and harassed by restrictive regulations. Most districts were capable of supplying their own necessaries of food and clothing, with the exception of salt, which was obtained from the old Roman mines. The few foreign goods were the luxuries of the rich.

Even this embryo of commerce was beginning to widen the circle of our national interests, to bring England into contact with Europe, and to compel her to some vague beginnings of a foreign policy. Hitherto the bond uniting her to the outside world had been one of religion; now gain, as well as piety, was to enter into her motives. It is not altogether accurate to say that under Canute she became part of a Northern Empire; it would be more to the

point to say that the same man happened to be King of three peoples at the same time. But this very fact was enough to give a North-Eastern bias to her trade and policy.

This state of things was hardly likely to be approved of by those Northmen who had now for a century been in possession of the French province of Normandy on the opposite side of the Channel, and who, by grafting Latin civilization on to their Viking ferocity and business instincts, were in a fair way to becoming the most formidable of Western peoples. The "Redeless" Ethelred, who seemed to have a perfect genius for doing harm to his country, had married a Norman princess, and Canute followed his example by marrying the same lady after Ethelred's death. Henceforth the Norman court was to have a finger in every English pie, and in particular constituted itself the patron of the exiled House of Cerdic. When Canute died, and his sons and successors, a pair of graceless young ruffians, quickly followed him to the grave, the old Saxon line was restored in the person of Ethelred's son, Edward, nicknamed "The Confessor", half a Norman by birth and wholly a Norman by upbringing. The first peaceful Norman conquest took place when this monarch appointed a Norman Archbishop, and filled his court with Norman favourites.

We must not fail to notice another factor which is destined to become of decisive importance in England's foreign policy. The County of Flanders, then extending as far to the West as the Somme, was rising, under a succession of brilliant rulers, into what has been described as the Manchester of the Middle Ages. The Flemings were of the same Frisian stock as the English, but they do not seem to have shared the English slowness of imagination, a fact that may perhaps be accounted for by the Gallic admixture in their blood. They early acquired the art of working up raw wool into cloths of various descriptions. Their own flocks were, however, insufficient to keep their looms employed, and hence they came to depend for their raw material upon the pastures of England. As long as the English were content to have their wool worked up for them abroad, an obvious bond of interest united English sheep-farmer and Flemish weaver, and to prevent Flanders from falling under the control of a strong alien power became then, as in fact it is now, the cornerstone of our foreign policy.

Had England been consistently able to preserve her friendship with Flanders, the Norman conquest could not have taken place. With a hostile Flanders on his flank, Duke William could never have

ventured to transport his army across the Channel. But while England did not know her own mind, because she had scarcely, as yet, one mind to know, William, who knew exactly what he wanted, united himself, by marriage, to a daughter of the House of Flanders, and thus secured, at the critical moment, the all-important alliance.

3

The Conquest

Anglo-Saxon civilization had by this time exhausted its vitality and was on the down grade. The havoc wrought by a second Danish invasion on a country that had never properly recovered from the first, had been more than even a Canute could repair. The land was beginning to break up into earldoms and the work of Alfred to be undone. Wessex itself had passed out of the King's hand, and when the house of Cerdic came back, it was to find Earl Godwin, half Englishman, half Dane, its ruler, and thus, as it was to prove, a more powerful personage than the King himself. What was most fatal of all, in that age, was that the sovereign was a weak and irritable man, cast in the same mould as his "redeless" father, and a cipher in the contest for power between the rulers of Mercia, Wessex, and Northumbria. Edward's only contribution to the government of the country was to place it in the hands of Normans and to allow Norman civilization to make a peaceful conquest of his Kingdom, an arguable policy, but one hardly likely to commend itself to Englishmen, and which was brought to an abrupt close by Godwin, whom the King had banished, and who returned as the champion of an English, or West Saxon reaction. The foreigners were sent packing and the House of Godwin henceforth governed in the King's name.

The country, meanwhile, was in a deplorable state, morally and intellectually. Wulfstan, who was Archbishop of York at the time of the Danish conquest, had drawn, in a sermon, a detailed picture of vice and oppression worthy of a Hebrew prophet. Treachery, perjury, and theft are everywhere rife; free right is put down, slave right is upheld, slaves are constantly forsaking their lords and joining the Danes. So demoralized have the people become that one Dane is more than a match for ten Englishmen; droves of slaves are openly driven along by two or three Danes from end to end of the land. But Wulfstan's had been a voice in the wilderness; things had tended to get worse rather than better.

At a time when Normandy was being swept along the full tide of the Cluniac revival, the Saxon priests could scarcely stammer out the words of the sacraments, and a person who understood grammar was a source of wonder and astonishment. It is the old complaint of Alfred, and not the efforts of his house nor of Dunstan had availed, in the long run, to wean England from the self-satisfied mental stagnation that is the worst form of insularity.

The end was as inevitable as any event in history can be said to be. While the Norman Duke was biding his time and making his plans, the House of Godwin was busy keeping itself in power. When Godwin died, his son Harold became the virtual ruler of the realm. His policy for the twelve years of his supremacy is not unfairly described by Green as one of national stagnation within and without, though he conducted a successful campaign against the Welsh and displayed a patriotic moderation in advancing the cause of his family. After the King's death he made the blunder common to men who have not the greatness to be content with the reality of power; he grasped at the shadow and allowed himself to be made King, thus losing the great but intangible advantage that the prestige of hereditary right, in the shape of a puppet King, confers. The rival Earls of Mercia and Northumbria, contemptible creatures at best, felt no incentive of loyalty towards this upstart. William, secure in the Flemish alliance, began at once to gather together an army and fleet for the invasion of England. Harold did the best he could in the way of counter preparations, but was called to Northumbria by a Danish invasion in support of one of his own brothers, whose tyranny had lost him the Earldom.

With prompt energy, he rushed North and relieved the defeated Earls of Northumbria and Mercia, by smashing the invasion in the greatest victory ever won by an English over a Viking host. Meanwhile the English fleet, which was waiting for William off the Isle of Wight, ill-found and ill-victualled, had had to go home; the coast was defenceless and Harold was called back to meet an enemy who ought never to have been allowed to land. The two Earls, with as much folly as treason, deserted him on the morrow of their deliverance; the North and Midlands stood aside till it was too late.

Harold had not even the full force of Wessex, for with a precipitancy that speaks more for his love of his people than his judgment as a soldier, he dashed Southward, to check the Norman plundering, without even waiting for the Western levies who were

marching to join him. Without cavalry and without missile weapons he assumed from the outset the attitude which is the most hopeless in war, that of a passive defensive. He had a small nucleus of regulars, his personal following of house-carls, but the remainder of his army was made up of shire levies, a territorial militia, without very much discipline. One quality they possessed, which has never failed Englishmen under a worthy leader; they were, even by the admission of their conquerors, dauntlessly brave. It is an astonishing fact that they repulsed two tremendous assaults; but they, or their leader, were incapable of an organized counter offensive. The territorial levies were even incapable of obeying orders; William was able to decoy them into a pursuit most probably by the old Danish trick of a feigned flight. They were ridden down in the open by cavalry, and the position once being pierced, the Norman archers were able to co-operate with the stormers by searching the rear ranks of the defending line with a shower of dropping arrows, to which the English could not reply. From noon to September twilight the hopeless struggle was maintained, until the King and the flower of his army had fallen at their posts. Only under cover of darkness were the last survivors swallowed in the gloom of the great forest behind. Given such a leader as William at the head of such an army, there could be no shadow of a chance for the ill-armed, ill-disciplined host not of England, but of Wessex and East Anglia.

So Saxon civilization had fallen at a blow, fallen because, as Archbishop Wulfstan had foreseen, it deserved and was bound to fall. A universal and slovenly individualism, without restraint, without discipline, without education, and without effectual contact with Continental civilization, was not even capable of self-defence. The pagan or hardly Christianized Dane had easily adapted himself to his English environment, but the gallicized and Romanized Norman had nothing but contempt for the slovenliness that permeated every department of English life. For a long time the very word Englishman was a term of contempt, and "Do you take me for an Englishman?" would be the reply of a testy baron to any stupid proposal. No doubt there was loss as well as gain. In some ways the Englishman was distinctly in advance of his conquerors. This was undoubtedly so in the plastic arts. It was a long time before a Normanized England was to recover the excellence of Anglo-Saxon figure sculpture. English illumination, though for centuries nothing had been produced to compare with the Lindesfarne Gospels, displayed a boldness and freedom all its own in the handling of line.

And in laying the foundations of ordered self-government, England was, speaking generally, more advanced than feudalized and aristocratic Normandy. The Witan, or council of magnates, exercised something more approaching the functions of a constitutional Parliament, than the feudal council of the Norman Duke, who had evidently imagined that by getting Harold, who had fallen into his hands after a shipwreck, to recognize his captor's claim to the English crown, he had settled once and for all a question of succession which, as a matter of fact, was in the sole competence of the Witan. The method of local government by moots or assemblies which had been elaborated by a succession of English Kings, though somewhat roughly handled in the first stages of the conquest, was too strong to be uprooted, and the Norman could do no more and no better than take it substantially as he found it.

4

The Norman Spirit

However sincerely William may have intended to rule as an English King by English law, there could be no question of his maintaining, as Canute had done, the continuity of the existing order. As well expect the English in Egypt to maintain the tradition of the Khedives! The Norman was willing enough to learn from his hosts where they had anything to teach him, and he had much, in the long run, to learn, even as a soldier. But his own ruthless efficiency and his newly acquired Latin culture impelled him to make a complete break with most of the outward and visible forms of Saxondom. At the time of the Conquest, the Norman civilization was at the zenith of its strength and creative energy, and Anglo-Saxon civilization, which had never recovered from the shock of the second Danish irruption, appeared to have outlived its prime and to be, at best, in a state of stagnation. Normans were appointed to almost every post of power and dignity, not only because they were conquerors, but because it had become apparent, even in the Confessor's day, that they were better fitted to hold them than Englishmen.

Of what Norman civilization implied we have evidence more convincing than any written record. Clearly and directly it speaks to us, from the sombre arches and massive columns of St. Bartholomew the Great in Smithfield, from the walls of Gundulph's Keep at Rochester, from many another secular or ecclesiastical building.

For the Norman had come to England as a builder even before he came as a conqueror, and it was in building that his genius found its natural and most lasting embodiment. It is, or was up till very recently, the fashion to talk of Norman architecture as Romanesque, one of those facile words that conveys less than half a truth. We are now beginning to realize that we must look further East than Rome for the true fountain head of Christian architecture in the Middle Ages. Professor Strzygowski has introduced us to buildings of pre-Norman date in Armenia and Upper Mesopotamia in which we find the characteristic Norman features of the massive, round arch, the cushion capital, and the barrel and cross-groined vaulting. There were many channels of commerce and religious intercourse through which Eastern influence must have spread Westward into Mediterranean lands. It was by way of Burgundy and the Nivernais [1] chiefly that the new style seems to have come to Normandy, and the Norman, ever hungering and thirsting after the arts of Western civilization, took just as much and no more than he could adapt to his own purposes and make part of himself. He was faced with other necessities of lighting and protection from the weather than those which confronted the Mediterranean builders. And thus the influence, partly Eastern and partly classical, that came from the South, was reinforced by Norse traditions of construction in timber. For though he might think and call himself a Frenchman, you had only to scratch the Norman to find the Viking.

Norman architecture may be said to have come of age in the monastery church of Jumièges, that was commenced in 1040, and only completed the year after the Conquest. There were still traces of German, and what is even more remarkable, of English [2] influence, and though the aisles had groined vaulting, the nave itself was roofed, Norse fashion, with timber. Norman architecture had still much to learn before the supreme achievement of Durham. but its leading features, its massive simplicity and sincerity, its austere preoccupation with the essentials of construction and the comparative neglect of ornament which distinguishes its earlier phases, survive to this day even in the ruins of Jumièges. And Jumièges served as an inspiration for an even more splendid building,

[1] The church of St. Étienne, at Nevers, is one that any uninformed visitor might take for a perfect specimen of primitive Norman.

[2] Unmistakable in two specimens of the coupled arch, high up in the wall of the church of St. Pierre, the oldest part of the abbey buildings.

King Edward's Abbey at Westminster, in which the Conqueror was crowned, and which has now wholly disappeared. Harold himself, the last hope of English nationalism, was fain to employ the Norman style for his foundation at Waltham.

There was, of course, a sense in which Rome had come back to England in the wake of the Norman. Normandy of the eleventh century might plausibly have been styled the Pope's Green Duchy. However cruel and rapacious the Norman might be, he seldom failed to be a devout Catholic. It was natural for him to look to Italy for the culture which he so eagerly sought. The great focus of Italian influence in Normandy was the monastery of Bec, which numbered among its brethren those two scholars of European fame, Lanfranc of Pavia and Anselm of Aosta, who became successively Archbishops of Canterbury. Whatever we, in the light of modern research, may discover about the real sources of Norman building, there can be no doubt that the Norman himself imagined that he was modelling his style upon the best traditions of the Holy and Eternal City.

The fact was that like all peoples of energetic individuality, he took from his models just as much and no more than he could make part of himself. He, like the Roman, was an imperialist, he might have taken for his motto "*regere imperio gentes*". The Roman *gravitas* is apparent in those massive, round arches, those tremendous, four-square towers, that clean, deliberate axe and chisel work. He, like the Roman, was essentially a man of this world. Gothic architecture rushes skywards in tumultuous aspiration, Norman reposes in mighty stillness on its pillars. The Norman, we feel, conquered advisedly; his is a silent architecture as men are silent who possess the power of command in a supreme degree.

Here the resemblance to Rome ceases. For all his organizing capacity, the Roman was at heart a vulgarian. He is seen at his best in his aqueducts and sewers, where he is not consciously striving for effect. In his more ambitious efforts, he combines an ignorance of constructional values with a meaningless prodigality of ornament. A dull weight crushes down upon his ponderous arches, like the bureaucracy of the Caesars, annihilating everything individual under its sway. The one thing he succeeds in expressing sincerely is bigness. Norman architecture is an altogether cleaner, simpler, more vital thing. The Norman too is a born ruler, his stone expresses perfectly his will to power, but with a severe absence of ostentation. The shafts of his columns are visibly adequate to their purpose; he has not the Gothic delight in demonstrating on how

slender a stone cluster a roof can be supported; these columns have strength and to spare—they say so quite frankly. His decoration, even where, in the later phases of the style, as at Durham and and St. Mary's Chapel, at Glastonbury, it is both rich and varied, is strictly obedient to the demands of construction; it is never allowed to conceal the essential features of the building or to say the thing that is not. There is a clear-cut pride of good workmanship about the axe-chipped capitals and zig-zag mouldings, that perhaps accounts for that indefinable impression of freshness that so many Norman buildings convey.

Somewhere before we have met with this simple, matter-of-fact workmanship. It is in the sagas. "Ketill Flatnose was the name of a man"—the style is the same though words are the material. With all his Romanesque veneer, the Norman was still at heart a Northman. His castles and cathedrals are sagas in stone. Every one of the Viking characteristics we see reproduced in him. Christianity has hardly mitigated his cruelty—the polite Robert de Belesme can tear out a child's eyes with his own hands—he is still the litigious formalist of the Norse Thing; he is, like the Viking, the master and not the slave of his religion; he has the Viking drive, the Viking practicality, the Viking eye for the main chance.

5

Norman Catholicism

But the Norman has become what temperament and opportunity have denied to the Anglo-Saxon, a good European, speaking the language of France, and championing, with an ardour more practical than spiritual, the religion of Rome. Rome had, indeed, come to England with Augustine, she had come, after a fashion, with Dunstan, but now she was to exercise, through the polite and adaptable Norman, an influence that was ultimately to place England in the van of civilized states. For if the Norman imposed an alien culture, he did so in no spirit of bigoted nationalism. Lanfranc and Anselm, monks of Bec, who sat in Augustine's chair at Canterbury, were no more Normans than they were Englishmen, and fortunate indeed it was for England that she found such men to breathe new life into her waning civilization.

William, bastard and conqueror, stark beyond measure to those who opposed his will, but mild to the good men who feared God, is a sufficiently familiar figure, but we are apt to forget the

almost equal debt we owe to Lanfranc. A Lombard, of the city of Pavia, then a centre of the revived interest in law, a renowned pleader and one of the first scholars of his time, the spirit moved him to forsake all and serve God in the humblest and most despised monastery he could find, which proved to be one just founded by an old Norman Knight, Herluin of Bec. Genius was not to be so easily denied. We find our converted lawyer high in trust at the court, opposing the Duke himself, banished, and then reprieved by a joke in season. Duke and Churchman, they recognized each other for what they were, and a staunch and touching friendship, equally honourable to both, was cemented between them. On William's death, the Archbishop's grief was so terrible that men feared for his life.

Neither King nor Archbishop cared for native Englishmen in authority, either in Church or State. Lanfranc had no use for uneducated Churchmen, and made a nearly clean sweep of the English bishops and abbots, though the saintly Wulfstan of Worcester retained his see by the posthumous intervention of the Confessor King, as the legend ran, but more likely because William and Lanfranc knew the worth of a good man when they found one. Lanfranc himself, " while he remained a foreigner to the world at large, assumed the position of an Englishman, writing ' we English ' and ' our island '." [1]

The spirit of the Catholic revival was now rife in the English Church. Cluny had prepared the way, but the direct influence of Cluny was only exerted in the reform of monastic life. In 1073 the Papal Chair came to be occupied by a dumpy, stammering monk called Hildebrand, who took the name of Gregory VII, and in his uncompromising zeal to purge the Church which simony and lay dictation had brought so low, put forward sweeping claims not only for her freedom but for her absolute supremacy. It says much for the wise reasonableness of William and Lanfranc that, at a time when the temporal and spiritual heads of Christendom were locked in mortal conflict, these two loyal and masterful spirits continued to work together in harmony. Courteously but firmly William declined Gregory's request to do homage to him for his realm of England, and by a series of compromises he and the Archbishop defined the respective spheres of Church and State. It is characteristic of Lanfranc that when the King hesitated about arresting the rebel Bishop Odo, he reminded him, with the subtlety of a trained lawyer,

[1] Dr. Hunt in the *Dictionary of National Biography.*

that it was the Earl of Kent and not the Bishop of Bayeux with whom the secular arm had to deal.

The most conspicuous effect of the Conquest consisted in the stone constructions, castles, and churches, that in a few decades transformed the landscape. Of these the most impressive and artistically valuable were the great monastery churches of the Benedictine order, now on the full flood tide of the Cluniac revival. The idea of Cluny had been to keep alive the Benedictine reaction against the solitary cult of individual salvation. The monk was nothing, the community everything. The way of a brother was to be one of life-long humility and self-denial, but the community in which he was merged might rightly affect a magnificence that would be deadly sin in one of its members. God was to be glorified by imposing building and splendid ceremonial. His house was to be a palace, enriched with all the adornments that devotion could lavish upon it. The bonds of Roman discipline were drawn even tighter than they were by Benedict, all monasteries that took their rule from Cluny submitted to the dictatorship of the mother-house.

The monasteries formally affiliated to Cluny were never very numerous nor very important in England. But it was the Cluniac spirit that dominated English monastic life in the period of Norman architecture when the monastic side of church life far outweighed the secular in importance. The Cluniac monk and the Norman aristocrat had much in common. Each, in his own sphere, was an imperialist, proudly convinced of the superiority of his order, and of his mission to impose his own civilization on " lesser breeds without the law ". But the baron had nothing like the discipline, the education and the team spirit of the monk, and unless curbed by a strong hand was apt to degenerate into a ruffian. So far as the Conquest brought a renewed civilization to England, it was the work of the Church, for which the mailed knights had but prepared the way. The Church was still the mind-training society on a vast scale, and perhaps, in the long run, it was for his good that the Englishman should be made to undergo a compulsory course.

6

Feudalism

The Conquest, it used to be said, was responsible for the introduction of the Feudal System, and more recently, it has been maintained, that so far from introducing, it really checked feudalism.

Both statements are, in a measure, true, and it would simplify matters if we were to keep in mind the distinction between the thing itself and the legal and political theory that was invented to explain it, and which may conceivably have had some effect in hardening its outlines and intensifying some of its results. Something in the nature of feudalism is an almost necessary stage in the growth of society and has occurred again and again. When communication is slow and the administrative art in its infancy, it is a matter almost of impossibility for the central power, in a state of any size, to maintain effective protection or control over its provinces. It is natural, when the need is for instant defence, for the ordinary man to have resource to the man on the spot, the man he knows. Thus we may take it that the first and most essential attribute of feudalism is the concentration of power and prestige in local chieftainships, owning an imperfect and limited allegiance to a central government. Such a state of things may occur when small independent governments are beginning to coalesce into a larger unit. More often still it tends to happen when the government set up by some powerful individual, some Charlemagne or Great Mogul, weakens its grip. It is a development that may take too many forms to admit of any simple generalization and is by no means peculiar to the West—the weakening of the central power in Japan resulted in a feudalism more logical and complete than any European variety. Something of the sort was bound to occur on the break up of Imperial Rome, and was, in fact, actually taking place while the Western Empire, reeling under the blows of her barbarian adversaries, was still in being.

The achievement of the Roman bureaucracy in administering that vast area from the Atlantic to the Euphrates was beyond the power of any medieval potentate. A heroic effort was made by Charlemagne not only to restore but to govern effectively the Empire of the West, but Charlemagne's Empire fell to pieces after his death, and then, besides Moslems and Magyars, came the Danes with their command of the sea, striking now at this point now at that, before the distant monarch could, even if he would, interfere. The most effective method of defence, on the Continent at any rate, was found to consist in the castle of the local magnate, and his retinue of heavily armed cavalry, which could be mobilized on the first alarm.

We are accustomed to think of the process of feudalization as consisting in the gradual encroachment of the lord on the liberties

of a more or less free peasantry. To our forefathers of the Dark Ages things probably appeared very differently. The modern joke that an Englishman loves a lord was, in those days, sober truth. We have seen how, in the old poem of *The Wanderer*, to be left lordless was almost as melancholy a fate as it was, in classic Greece, to be a citiless man. The lord not only would be looked upon as an ever present help in time of foreign invasion, but even in peace he could answer for his man at a court of justice, and this was all-important where evidence was required, not of guilt or innocence, but of respectability. Athelstan, by way of rounding off the police system of the country, went to the length of commanding that every lordless man should have a lord found for him in the folk-moot, under penalty of being treated as an outlaw, and killed at sight.

There is, however, another aspect in the relation of lord and man. Feudal lords, as a class, were no more romantic philanthropists than modern men of business. If the lord is going to protect land, it must be formally acknowledged as his own land, and hence the basic maxim of feudalism, *nulle terre sans seigneur*. Hence the man who seeks a lord's protection or, in the technical phrase, "commends himself" to him, has formally to surrender his land to the lord, who then permits him to re-occupy it on the performance of certain conditions. The nature of these conditions will first of all be determined by the necessity that has produced them. The vassal will be expected to give military service to his protector, to cultivate the military virtues of loyalty and obedience—treason to a lord is the unforgivable sin, meriting the lowest circle of Hell. But the lord has not only to be followed in time of war; he and his necessary retinue have to be maintained in time of peace, and therefore the vassal has to redeem his land by performing various strictly fixed services—so many days' work on the "demesne" or home farm, such and such customary dues, ordinary and extraordinary. A lord with several manors and a large retinue will spend most of the year in journeying from one to the other, eating up his quota of each one's resources.

In the dim origins of feudalism the lord appears to some extent in the role of capitalist. It had been his function not only to lead his retainers but also to provide them with arms, and even to this day there survives in certain manors the custom of the heriot, to be paid to the lord of the manor as a sort of death duty, and which in its origin was the return to the lord, on the death of a vassal, of the arms with which the lord had supplied him.

But the feudal system, by which each man held his land of a lord who might command his allegiance, had to be imposed on another, of a co-operative and practically self-sufficient agricultural community. The real or fictitious family groups, the Birmings and Kemsings who had appropriated or been apportioned the first village settlements, were incapable, with their limited resources, of farming the land in isolation. How much, if anything, they adopted from the slave-cultivated villas of Roman Britain, is a moot point among historians, but when they gradually emerge into the light of history we find the petty landowners, free or half-free, of these village communities very much—if we may borrow a simile from Professor Vinogradoff—in the position of shareholders in a company. Their shares in the business of extracting subsistence from the soil were their own ; each family lived or starved on its own dividends ; but the management of the business was the common concern and its main features settled at periodical general meetings of the shareholders. A man would have his own land, it is true, but it would be apportioned to him in shares or strips, not together but scattered among those of neighbours. The village plough, or ploughs, would be used in turn, much as the washhouse of certain London flats is nowadays. The rotation of crops—two of the great open fields of strips being cultivated and one left fallow—would be settled by the general voice, and the pasture and waste lands would be held in common, though the amount of stock that each man might turn out on them was strictly proportioned to the value of his holding. The meeting of shareholders also served as a court, in which the law or custom of the community was declared by the general voice of its members.

It was upon this self-governing community of peasant shareholders—of which we have many analogies in peoples at a similar stage of development—that the feudal system came to be superimposed. Regarded from the standpoint of feudal law, the lord was the owner of all the land and the master of all its inhabitants ; from the standpoint of what we may call community or folk law he was in the position of a highly paid director who was also the largest shareholder in the company. And even with the sharpening and intensification of feudal law after the Conquest, when the village community had definitely evolved into the manor, the community law was not superseded and the lord of the manor was so far from being an absolute tyrant that his rights were defined with the utmost minuteness, and he might, on occasion, appear as a suitor in his own

manor court, whose law was declared by the voice of all the suitors.

The legal origins of feudal theory form an interesting study, but one of little importance for our purpose. No doubt it can be traced back, without breach of continuity, to certain features in the Roman land system. But the theory, however it originated, did no more than recognize and regularize a state of things imposed upon mankind by necessity. The State, when government was incapable of functioning efficiently over large areas, remained a mere abstraction. The only loyalty to which the ordinary man could be expected to rise was to a person, the man with whom he was brought in personal contact. This, to the vast majority, would be the local lord, the man on the spot, who would, according to the theory of feudalism, have opportunities of coming into personal touch with an overlord or king to whom, in turn, his allegiance was due. But in practice loyalty of this kind sat all too lightly on the powerful vassal, with a compact army of retainers to back him. Feudalism might work well enough within a day or two's ride of the lord's principal seat, but over anything like a national area it was a hopeless and chronic failure.

It is obvious that such a system is the very negation of patriotism. It looks not to the State but to the estate. That explains much of the futility of medieval politics. No sooner is a dominion got together than it is parcelled out by will between different brothers. Even the greatest sovereigns, even Charlemagne and William the Conqueror, were not above partitioning their territories by bequest. The invariable theme of the chivalric romances is one of personal loyalty and personal motives. As soon as the lord is dead his peace lapses, and when a King dies a great vassal, like Robert de Belseme, will ride off with a quiet conscience for a spell of private looting. Vassals are ready to support an immediate lord against his overlord, so that a sovereign's position may be that of one among several competing magnates as powerful as himself. The very offices of state become hereditary and independent.

Medieval political theory was entirely on the side of local autonomy and personal loyalty. The universe itself was thought of as a macrocosmos, a living, organic unity presided over by God, but every smaller community, and, for that matter, every man is likewise a microcosmos, a little world in which the larger world is mirrored. Again, God being a person, an infinite Being more or less vaguely conceived of in man's image, it follows that a man, a lord or monarch, is the appropriate ruler of every human community and invested

with a certain divine authority which makes the feudal tie more sacred than any ordinary contract between man and man. Every human right to govern is, in the medieval view, a divine right.

7

Norman Feudalism

The old statement that the Conquest was responsible for the introduction of the Feudal System might be amended by leaving out the word "feudal". What the Norman really introduced, vastly for the benefit of Englishmen, was system. The growth of the English village or manorial community had, like most other English developments, been patchy and unsystematic. As we gather from the Conqueror's fiscal survey called Domesday Book, there were isolated survivals of free and lordless communities; there was a complication of tenures and class distinctions that is the despair or delight, according to temperament, of the modern researcher. But the drift of English development had been towards a feudalism that was none the less real from being more slovenly and informal than the French kind. When the country was being overrun by Danes there must have been small chance for the lordless village. In so far as we can speak of any rule prevailing in that unruly England of the Confessor, it can fairly be expressed in the French feudal maxim, "no land without a lord."

In Normandy, on the other hand, we have more of the form and less of the reality of feudalism. In theory the Duke stood in exactly the same relation of lordship to his barons as his own overlord, the King of France, stood to him. He was the supreme landowner, his vassals held their estates by knight service, and the governing body was his court of tenants in chief. But in practice there was all the difference in the world between the wide realm of France, over which no ruler of that time could have hoped to exercise effective control, and the compact duchy on the Lower Seine. Here a line of able rulers had built up a central power whose strength and efficiency were less in the feudal than the Roman tradition. The Duke was able to maintain direct control by means of officials called vicecomites, closely corresponding to the English King's sheriffs, and each governing a district small enough to be manageable. Normandy contained no feudatories strong enough to set this authority at defiance. Even the baron's private jurisdiction was qualified by the

Duke's practice of reserving the most important pleas for his own court.

We must therefore picture the Duchy as the most efficiently run state in Western Europe. The Norman's creative energy impelled him to fashion his institutions with the same sureness of touch that we see in the axe-work of his columns. All must be done in order and by rule, a living rule in constant process of development. Even the rudiments of a jury system were being experimented with.

Such needless complication as that of the English social system was anathema to the practical Norman, who set to work interpreting it in terms of the French feudalism in whose logical atmosphere he had been nurtured. The meeting or gemot of wise men that had advised the English Kings was feudalized into such a court of tenants in chief as that of a Norman Duke. Tenure by thegnhood was replaced—whether all at once or in a few decades is a disputed point—by the more unified and sharply defined knight-service. There was much levelling down and some levelling up of classes; the slave on the one hand and various grades of semi-free tenants on the other were lumped together as villeins, or peasants tied to the soil, rendering certain fixed services for their holdings of the great fields, and with rights and duties defined by the law of the manor.

But William, of all people, was the least likely to be the slave of the feudal or any other theory. Even in Normandy he had contrived, under feudal forms, to set up an administration whose spirit was the negation of feudalism. In England it was all to his advantage to pose as the lawful successor to good King Edward, though what his private conscience was in the matter may be judged by his reported deathbed confession that he had acquired the crown wrongfully. His posthumous nickname " conqueror " is a mistranslation—William the Getter would be nearer the mark. His own age knew him, unceremoniously, as William the Bastard.

True Norman as he was, he knew how to put himself on the right side of the law, and at the same time to make the law his slave, and not his master. For his most ruthless measures, he could plead precedent. If he confiscated the estates of Harold's supporters, it was not by right of conquest, but for the same reason as holy Edward had seized those of the House of Godwin, because they had been forfeited by treason. His most terrible act of all, the ravaging of the North, differed only in degree from the punishment that Edgar the Peaceful had actually inflicted on Thanet, and Edward the Confessor had ordered Godwin to inflict on Dover. So great a soldier and

statesman as William—it comes as a shock to discover that he could only execute a shaky cross by way of signature—was above the vulgar itch to flaunt power as well as have it.

He had, in fact, everything to gain by exploiting the heritage of Alfred and Canute. No doubt it required the might of a victorious army to prevent the realm from dissolving into its component earldoms, but once the King's peace was established from the Cheviots to the Channel, there was much in the English system that he might turn to his own advantage. For one thing, there was an easily tapped revenue in the Danegeld, or land tax, by whose proceeds Ethelred had been in the habit of buying off the Danes. Then there was a territorial militia, that might at any time be called out against rebellious feudatories. And, finally, the Conqueror found to his hand, in the county sheriffs, just such a means of maintaining his direct authority as he already possessed, in Normandy, in the vicecomites. Thus, however much he may have introduced the language and fictions of feudalism—and these came to prevail to as great an extent, probably, as in France itself—he was determined that nothing like the reality of it should get a footing in England. He made as complete an end of the old Heptarchic earldoms as the French Revolution was to make of the provinces. Henceforth the administrative unit was to be the shire or county under the King's reeve. Dominating all was a central government, ever growing in experience and complexity, through which the King made his sovereignty direct and effective.

To understand why, and how far, such a policy was feasible, we must take stock of William's position. He was holding down the country, and had to put down more than one dangerous rebellion with forces that probably did not much exceed a modern brigade. He took the most effective way of doing this by quartering the fighting noblemen, who had enlisted in the venture, on the confiscated estates, which were allotted piecemeal as they came in, thus avoiding the creation of big, compact fiefs. These men understood the art of permanent fortification, and the first step of each new occupier was to ensconce himself in a castle, perhaps no more at first than a mound with a wooden improvization on top and a palisaded enclosure beneath, but as far as the natives were concerned, impregnable. Thus the whole land was covered with a network of fortified posts, just as the Boer Republics were held, in the last stages of the South African War, by a system of blockhouses, only with this difference, that the castle was a practically independent unit.

Nobody knew better than the Conqueror that the castle might at any moment prove not only a nucleus of tyranny, but also of rebellion. Hence there was a community of interest between monarch and people that, once it was clearly understood that the new masters had come to stay, the English were not slow to recognize. Within nine years of the conquest some of the leading barons were up in arms and the county militias were turning out, under their sheriffs, on behalf of King William. From an Englishman's point of view the new order of things was not without its compensations. If the new King governed sternly and taxed highly, he at least maintained an excellent peace, and times were probably not so bad as during the Danish invasions.

For this supreme blessing, at least, the Conquest had conferred on England—the days of serious invasion were over forever. Three years after Hastings the Danes were back supporting a Northumbrian invasion, but it was their last visit, and the whole country from the Humber to the Tees was turned into a desert by William's calculated vengeance. At the end of the reign a mighty Danish and Scandinavian armada assembled for one last effort to recover England for the Northern sphere of influence, but it never set sail. If in one sense England was conquered at Hastings, in another it is true to say that she passed from the defensive to the offensive. She was no longer a loose federation of provinces waiting to be attacked, but a united realm under a King capable of carrying war into the enemy's territory. Forty years, almost to a day, after the Conqueror's landing, an expeditionary force from England, fighting on foot in the English fashion, routed the Norman baronage and conquered the Duchy for the Conqueror's son, "doubtless," says William of Malmesbury, "by the wise dispensation of God, that Normandy should be made subject to England on the very day that Norman power had come to subdue that Kingdom."

The fact that the Norman Kings had no cause to fear a serious invasion, did away with the need out of which feudalism had arisen. It was only on the Scottish and Welsh frontiers and—while the Danish menace was still on the horizon—in Kent, that there was any necessity for large, compact baronies, under lords who could mobilize a strong force at the shortest possible notice and maintain strongholds capable of blocking an invasion. The history of these baronies showed that the strong fief was at best a necessary evil, and that the frontier magnate was little less dangerous to his sovereign than to the enemy. William was wise in entrusting the two most formidable of these

creations to bishops, who could not bequeath their power to descendants, and were practically his nominees.

William decisively broke with the whole principle of feudalism in the oath of allegiance to himself that he exacted at Salisbury in 1086 from " all the landowning men of property there were all over England, whosoever men they were ". Attempts have been made to minimize the importance of this step on the ground that " all " is obviously an exaggeration, but nothing can detract from its decisiveness as an assertion of principle. Henceforth a man's loyalty was first and foremost due not to his local Earl or Baron, but to the sovereign, and loyalty to the King of England passes by imperceptible stages into loyalty to England—in fact, patriotism.

8

The Conquered

We may ask, how was it with the average Englishman, he who carried on the never-ending life and death struggle with nature, that cannot be remitted for any change of human masters. We are perhaps too much in the habit of assuming that the Conquest was, for him, an unmitigated disaster, an exchange of a jolly, native master for a French-speaking bully who ground his face unceasingly and made his lot ten times worse than it had ever been before.

On some manors this may well have been, particularly in the first years of military conquest, before the invaders felt themselves firm in the saddle. The Norman was little more gentle than his Viking fathers ; he had acquired the sense of belonging to a superior civilization and regarded the boorish Saxon with an ineffable contempt. There must have been more than one ruffianly adventurer of the type of Ivo de Taillebois, who amused himself by setting dogs on to peaceful folks' cattle, for what could be expected of an illiterate baron when even the Church produced abbots like Paul of St. Albans, who desecrated the tombs of his English predecessors, and Thurstan of Glastonbury, who settled a musical difference with his monks by having them shot down by archers ?

> Things like that you know must be
> After a famous victory,

but life, most of all agricultural life, has a way of finding its level after the direst storm. The Norman was no lamb, but he liked to do things decently and in order, and once settled down on the land,

he had every inducement to run his little community on efficient and tolerable lines. The landlord who hunts his tenants' cattle, the landlord who makes himself thoroughly hated by his labourers, is not only a knave but a fool, and the average Norman was anything but that. The routine of the months, that the medieval sculptor has limned for us with such vivid realism, had to and did go on in hundreds of obscure manors all over the kingdom, where a bad harvest was a calamity that touched the poor man more nearly, perhaps, than a change of masters from Thegn to Baron.

After all, were times and masters so good before the conquest that the English peasant had much to lose by any change? Such is not the impression that we get from the scanty evidence that has come down to us, which rather tends to show that the second series of Danish invasions had dealt Anglo-Saxon civilization a blow from which it never properly recovered. William of Malmesbury, who was as much an Englishman as a Norman, in an account which was obviously intended to be impartial, speaks of an unprotected commonalty before the Conquest, a prey to rich and powerful men who made fortunes by seizing on their neighbours' property and even selling them as slaves, one horrible custom being to sell maidservants, once the master had made them pregnant, to prostitution or foreign slavery. We are the more inclined to believe the substantial truth of this account from the fact that the good monk is at evident pains to qualify it as far as he dares, by admitting that this state of things was not without exception.

We have one vivid sidelight on the workaday state of things on an Anglo-Saxon farm in the shape of Bishop Aelfric's *Colloquy*, which was intended to serve the humble purpose of a school book. Here we get an impression that the poor man's life was one of ceaseless work under the hardest possible conditions, though we must make what allowance is due to the Englishman's immemorial habit of grousing. "Indeed it is great toil," complains the ploughman, "because I am not free," while as for the oxherd, who had to tend the cattle by day and guard them by night against thieves, it is difficult, as Miss Seebohm [1] points out, to see how the poor fellow could have got any sleep at all during the summer months. Particularly hard must have been the lot of the slaves, to whom even Alfred's laws denied, except at the lord's discretion, the holidays of the Church.

The coming of the Norman, if it turned a good many freemen

[1] In *The Evolution of the English Farm.*

into villeins, was no bad thing for the bottom dog of all, since the class of slaves rapidly begins to vanish under the new order of things. When, twenty years after the Conquest, came the great fiscal survey of Domesday, the picture it gives us is of a society in which everybody's status and duty is a matter of exact record. Where rule and custom prevail, there is little room for arbitrary tyranny. This is the impression we get of the manor when, later on, it emerges into the light of the court rolls.

Perhaps we are too apt, in reconstructing the past, to imagine that all men's minds were engaged, as much as our own, with the great political events and social movements that loom so large in our vision. If we could be transported to an eleventh century English manor and listen to the daily talk of the villagers, we should possibly be amazed at the triviality of it all. Where we expected to hear complaints of foreign tyranny, we should more likely hear grumbles, deep but not loud, at the unfairness of the reeve, who, being one of themselves, was up to tricks and evasions that would have escaped the notice of a French-speaking lord, whom they might only see for two or three brief but strenuous weeks on his yearly tour from manor to manor. But perhaps the loudest complaints of all would be reserved for the weather, and the doings of William the Conqueror would arouse less interest than those of—let us say—the smith's wife.

In this laborious and trivial round of the English peasant's existence there were two redeeming features. However hardly the lord's power may have pressed upon him, he himself and his fellows were able to keep it within the limits prescribed by the law or custom of the manor, which was declared not by the lord himself, but by the suitors at his court. It is true that the King's courts would have granted no remedy to a villein against a lord, who should have broken the custom of his own manor, but to substitute arbitrary tyranny for immemorial routine was a thing that does not seem to have occurred to normal landowners. As soon as we get detailed information about the working of the system, the records show us that the principle of the Great Charter had come to hold substantially good of this kingdom in miniature, where not even an unfree man could be deprived of an alleged right save by the judgment of his peers and the law of the manor.

Most important of all to the poor man was his unquestioning belief that no conditions of serfdom could deprive him of his membership of Christ's kingdom, a membership of which he was continually being kept in mind by the offices of the Church. From his mud and

wattle hut, from the dust and sweat of his drudgery, he could pass into a building spacious and beautiful, and be partaker in the miracle of Godhead made one with manhood, even the humblest.

9

The Central Power

After the Conqueror's death his work of establishing a strong central power went steadily forward for half a century, and his successor and namesake, nicknamed the Red, from his apoplectic countenance, inherited his strength without his statesmanship. The bold iconoclast who poked fun at the ordeal and professed his willingness to join the Jews if they could beat the Christians in open argument, was no commonplace ruffian, and may have had less than his due from shocked monkish chroniclers. But a ruffian he was, and with the help of a kindred spirit, a clerk called Ralph Flambard, set himself to exploit Church and State for what they would fetch. Resistance was hopeless in face of the central power that his father had built up, but the Middle Ages had more ways than one of removing a tyrant, and when the Red King happened to be out of the way of witnesses in the New Forest a convenient arrow found its billet in his heart. His brother Henry, who was a member of the same hunting party, and in a position to establish a formal alibi, galloped hot foot to Winchester, to seize the crown and treasure with a promptitude that is at least remarkable.

The new King, who, like his brother, violated the rule of hereditary succession by seizing the crown, presented the almost unique phenomenon, for that age, of a layman who was also literate and a passable scholar. With an ability comparable to that of his father, he set himself to consolidate and organize the central power of which the Conqueror had laid firm the foundations. Though he spoke French and though the court was still filled with persons of Norman names and Norman descent, he was enough of an enlightened egotist to perceive that it was better to be a national King of England than a mere feudal overlord of Norman barons. To his brother, as well as himself, the English people had shown themselves enthusiastically loyal. When Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent, in whose favour the Conqueror, as a precaution against the Danes, had made an exception to his rule of granting scattered fiefs, raised the baronage against Rufus, the English had quickly cornered him in his castle at Rochester, and loudly expressed their disgust when

the Bishop escaped hanging. When, early in Henry's reign, the barons, who very naturally preferred his shiftless elder brother, Robert Duke of Normandy, to a monarch capable of keeping them in order, again rose in rebellion, the English levies once again turned out to vindicate the royal authority. Again the ringleader was one of those Border lords whose fiefs were supposed to be bulwarks of the realm, the Earl of Shrewsbury, the infamous Robert de Belesme. His fate was that of Odo, and on the surrender of his castle of Bridgenorth, the English are said to have cried: "Rejoice King Henry, and thank the Lord God, since you only began to reign freely when you conquered Robert de Belesme and turned him out of your Kingdom." Three years later Henry was over in Normandy, and the English were congratulating themselves for having avenged Hastings and turned the tables on the Duchy at the field of Tenchbrai.

It was a memorable stroke of policy when Henry, braving the jeers and nicknames of his nobility, allied himself with a daughter of the House of Alfred. It was symbolic of the change that was taking place in the country. Already it was becoming difficult to distinguish a Norman from an Englishman. The generation of the Conquest was passing away, and the one thing that tended to keep the feeling of difference alive was the fact that after Robert's defeat Normandy was part of the King's dominions, and many of the nobles had estates on both sides of the Channel.

The grafting of the new stock on to the old had been accompanied by a grafting of civilizations. Just as life is renewed and quickened by the blending of two cells, so the almost moribund English civilization was fertilized by the Norman spirit even more than the Norman blood, and started on a new and more vigorous growth than ever before. But in order for this blending to thrive, it was necessary to remove, as far as possible, the disturbing and wasteful factors of war and civil disorder. This was exactly what the Conqueror and his youngest son accomplished by the firm peace they maintained and the strong central power they fostered to maintain it.

Their task was to expand a feudal court into the governing organization of the State. Our ancestors were wont to regard all matters of State in a purely personal aspect. The monarch was a landowner, the State his estate, his vassals his tenants, and his court his household. Hence for a long time we find the greatest ministers of the State dignified by such titles as Keeper of the Chamber or the Wardrobe. The King's court was a manor court on a glorified scale, at which the tenants declared the law, and which performed

indiscriminately executive, legislative, and judicial functions. To talk of its constitution would be a straining of language; what it was and what it did depended largely on the personality of the King and the circumstances of the moment.

Such may have been the theory, but in practice the combined realms of England and Normandy demanded other methods of government than those which answered for a few hundred acres. The Norman Kings therefore had to expand their court into an efficient governmental machine or see their power founder in a vortex of feudal anarchy. The Norman mind was fertile in expedients. The Kings soon got to work on the English institutions that they found waiting for them, and by applying to them French feudal method and Latin scholarship transformed them out of recognition.

At first it was natural to proceed less by rule than a series of improvisations. The King's court being an indefinite was also an adaptable body, and anybody the King chose to represent him was to all intents and purposes the King himself and brought the court with him. If some big case had to be tried, the King might depute one of the clerical scholars of his entourage to deal with it, as, for example, the Conqueror deputed the Bishop of Coutances to represent him in the case of the Bishop of Worcester *versus* the Abbot of Evesham. It was an obvious, and indeed an inevitable step, as the demands upon royal justice increased, to make this practice regular instead of issuing a special commission for each particular case. Hence, under Henry I, we find the functions of the King's court being exercised by justices in eyre, or on circuit, a revival of Charlemagne's practice of appointing *missi*, or travelling commissioners.

But a judge's task, even in those days, demanded a higher degree of training than that of the illiterate magnates who constituted the majority of a feudal court. Nor was it the only task for which a staff of experts was necessary. The two pillars of kingly power were peace and a large revenue, and to deal with this revenue, an elaborate system of checking and accounting had to be devised. The earliest of government departments was, in fact, the exchequer, and by the time of Henry II it had developed so specialized a technique that its treasurer, who was also Bishop of Ely, was moved to write a comprehensive handbook for the benefit of his subordinates, an administrative classic.

In fact, the King's court, however constant it might be in theory,

in practice had to fulfil two quite different functions, that of a permanent staff by which the government could be carried on, and that of an occasional deliberative assembly. For the Norman Kings, like those of Wessex before them and parliamentary England after them, had in some way to ensure the support of the people who mattered before they could embark on any vital line of policy. But the fighting barons, the great landowners who might follow the King to Normandy or pronounce the condemnation of a highly placed traitor, had neither the time nor the skill for checking the accounts of sheriffs or performing the routine of " the household ".

In theory the King's court was just as fully the court when it consisted of a few permanent officials attached to his person, as when it was afforced at special festivals or emergencies by the whole body of the more important landowners, lay and ecclesiastical. But our ancestors were practical men pursuing practical ends, and no more liable than ourselves to be the dupes of their own fictions, or to confuse the great council of the nation with the smaller and permanent body that constituted the bench and civil service.

The extent to which the King would be dependent on his council of magnates, the court in the larger sense, was determined less by constitutional theory than force of circumstance. And circumstances were peculiarly favourable to the Norman House. The long period of comparative peace enabled them to keep their expenditure below their huge, regular incomes, and to refrain from sudden or extraordinary calls on their subjects' resources. The Conqueror and Henry I may have taxed hard, but they taxed regularly, and even Rufus, who after all did not survive the process long, seems to have worked rather by a sort of legalized chicanery than by the extraordinary levies and new methods of taxation that are the parents of rebellion. To finish up a normal year with a credit balance was, down to Stuart times, the first principle of successful kingcraft.

Small wonder, then, if a capable sovereign was able, in the ordinary way, to do pretty much as he liked, and if the council of magnates did not get much more chance of deflecting his will than those gemots, or shire courts, which Ralph Flambard " drove " throughout the length and breadth of England. But the mere fact that the Kings constantly appeal to its counsel and consent, and even talk of the Barons " giving " an aid, shows that its powers are only dormant, and that the old Witan survives in the Norman Great Council, from which Parliament will one day be born.

It was at the accession of a new King that dormant liberties

suddenly became active. All the Norman Kings were, by the strict hereditary principle, usurpers, and all of them, even the Conqueror, were fain to make some sort of bargain with their prospective subjects. Of course, it was open to them, once they were firmly in the saddle, to act on the Red King's cheerful doctrine that a man couldn't be expected to keep all his promises, but the mere fact of a King's issuing a charter of liberties was a declaration of principle, the importance of which could hardly be exaggerated. It was a formal admission that there were rules of the game by which even Majesty must abide. The time would come when the subjects would themselves formulate these rules, and when the Charter of Henry I would be appealed to as the foundation of the Great Charter of English liberties.

10

The Towns

However hardly the Conquest may have borne on the villages, the towns were not such easy nuts for a feudal lord to crack. The town at the time of the Conquest was still only half urbanized; it had to raise the greater part of its food from its own resources, and would be surrounded by broad open fields and pastures cultivated after the manorial fashion by the burgesses. No doubt the towns were hard hit by the Conquest; their houses would be overshadowed by the grey, frowning mass of the baronial keep, whose garrison held the citizens at its mercy, and whose lord was able to curb their liberties and take toll of their resources in all kinds of ways. But they were for the most part allowed to maintain their time-honoured customs, and since they were not only agricultural but also trading communities, the power of the purse was able, in the long run, to wear down that of the sword. In the generations following the Conquest we see the lords giving, or rather bartering away their power by slow degrees. Sooner or later the lord would go on a crusade, or incur some extraordinary expenditure that would make him fain to sign away the whole or part of his privileges by charter, in return for cash down. The money was soon spent, but the charter remained and the citizens were constantly gaining and never losing ground. The same process was taking place in the royal boroughs, those which the King kept under his direct lordship, and whose charters form a series of milestones on the road to complete municipal freedom.

Perhaps we are too ready to visualize the relations of town and castle as those of perpetual hostility. It must be remembered that if the lord or castellan was in one aspect a potential tyrant, he was also the natural defender and sometimes the ally of the citizens. This, at any rate, seems to have been the case at Bristol, whose citizens had a notorious record in the way of raiding and slave-dealing, which caused the town to be known as "the stepmother of England". There was only too good an understanding between town and castle when the neighbouring town of Bath was sacked, and would have been sacked again but for its stout defence, or when, during the anarchy of Stephen's reign, people were brought into the city and tortured to make them disgorge their wealth.

It is in the towns that English life shows the least breach of continuity. The firm peace maintained by the Kings, with the exception of Stephen, and the bettering of overseas communication, fostered the spirit of commercial enterprise, at first in the merchant or trading gilds, for handicrafts were only in their infancy, though Henry I was doing what he could by importing colonies of Flemish weavers. There was hardly the possibility of a national, commercial policy, since the towns were nearly independent economic units, and negotiated with each other in entire disregard of nationality. London was on just the same footing in regard to Bristol as she was in regard to Sluys or Rouen. There was an obvious danger in this of what did, in fact, happen in France, Germany, Italy and Flanders, of the towns developing into practically independent cities, armed against each other and the Sovereign. But the same iron hand that crushed the independent fief prevented the independent commune, and so the castle, even if it was often a thorn in the side of the city, proved in the long run a blessing to the country.

In no part of England was the continuity of life less affected by the Conquest than in London, which, owing to its unique position as a port and road-junction, was rapidly overshadowing the royal city of Winchester as the real capital. The Conqueror himself had fought shy of an open assault on the city that had, half a century before, given a sound drubbing to another Conqueror, the pagan Sweyn, and when he had won it by negotiation, he built two castles, Castle Baynard on the West and the Tower on the East, to keep it in check. But the Tower was more liable to be besieged by the Londoners than the Londoners to be terrorized by the Tower, and it was not long before the thriving cosmopolitan city came to exercise an influence that made it more than once, in times of crisis, the

arbiter of England's political destiny. Its prosperity, in spite of heavy taxation and the exactions of Norman absentee landlords, is evidenced by the number of churches that were built, including old St. Paul's, which was commenced four years after the Conqueror's death. Stephen, who usurped the throne on the death of the first Henry, was fain to solicit the support of her citizens, and his rival, the Empress Matilda, was ruined in the very moment of her triumph, because her ill-advised haughtiness set the Londoners against her. When the next King, the great Henry II, was at the crisis of his reign and faced with a dangerous rebellion, the first question he asked was whether the citizens of London were loyal.

We have a valuable description of London, as it was in the time of Henry II, from the pen of William Fitzstephen, the clerk and biographer of Becket, who, by the way, was himself son of a London port-reeve. Here there is not the least trace of subjection to a foreign power, on the contrary it is evident that Londoners are completely satisfied with themselves, and proud to be members of a city surpassing all others in wealth, commerce, and magnificence. The citizens, says the admiring clerk, "are respected and are noted above all other citizens for the elegance of their manners, dress, table, and discourse," while the section devoted to the matrons consists of the single sentence: "The matrons of the city are perfect Sabines." There is no city, Fitzstephen is careful to add, in which more approved customs are observed, such as attending church, preparing entertainments, and celebrating funerals, in fact we are assured that "the only inconveniences of London are the immoderate drinking of foolish persons and the frequent fires". Not only is London a grand but also a jolly city, devoted to the practice of every kind of sport, from tilting to stone-throwing; one particularly strenuous amusement being practised on the ice at Moorfields, two skaters, armed with poles, assaulting each other at full speed, and coming down with such violence that they are carried far apart, and whatever part of their heads comes in contact with the ice is laid bare to the skull. Finally, Londoners have got to the stage of enhancing their civic pride by legend. Alone they have repulsed Julius Caesar, "a man who delighted to deluge his path in blood." London is older than Rome, being founded by Brutus of Troy. Here, in fact, in the reign of the first Angevin, we find a full-blown, municipal patriotism easily capable of expanding into a national patriotism.

II

King's Peace and Baronial Anarchy

The centralizing work of the Kings was, meanwhile, building up a machinery of government such as no other nation in Europe could boast. There is no need to attribute to these Kings any but the most egotistic motives. They were, with the exception of Stephen, and including Henry II and his sons, men of abnormal energy even in that age of energy from which the Gothic architecture was born. The greatest of them all, the second Henry, was not only "the old warrior" and the prudent judge, but was capable of rolling on the floor in a paroxysm of rage, and abjuring the Almighty Being in whom he believed, as the only way of venting his feelings. Such energy, like that of Napoleon, who was liable to hardly more restrained outbursts, must needs find an outlet, and when its subject is head of the State, it is a necessity of his existence to make that State as efficient an expression of his will as possible.

The structure and theory of government were so different in the times of the Norman Kings from what they became later, that we are apt to ignore the extent to which the essentials of statecraft persist throughout the whole course of our history as a united nation. So long as the King aspires to govern as well as reign, his power is in almost direct proportion to his capacity for keeping the peace. War is a gaping hole in the bottom of the treasury chest, through which wealth pours out faster than it can conveniently be gathered in, and if war is prolonged there is nothing for it except to put on the screw of taxation to an intolerable extent or else to go bankrupt. It is difficult to say whether the wastage of foreign or of civil strife is the more disastrous, and the wise sovereign will be he who is prudent enough to avoid the one and strong enough to prevent the other.

From the time of the Conqueror's harrying of the North, a long period of comparative peace supervened. One or two easily suppressed baronial revolts, the fraternal squabbles in Normandy of Rufus and Henry with Duke Robert, and a little desultory fighting with the French King, constitute a sixty-five years' record of peace which England had not approached since the height of the Roman power. When, at the end of the eleventh century, the chivalry of Christendom poured Eastward in the great and ultimately unsuccessful counter-offensive against Islam, England, still on the edge of the world, was comparatively little affected, though the crusade

served as an outlet for the energy of a few baronial adventurers of whom she was better rid. The Kings no doubt screwed all they conveniently could out of their realm in the way of taxation, but by the good peace they maintained abroad and the strong hand they kept on the baronage they might claim to have earned it.

England's foreign policy was already beginning to take the lines it was to retain through the ensuing centuries. The key to our international position was constituted by the Low Countries, and particularly by the County of Flanders. It was to England that the Flemings principally looked for their wool, and hence the Flemish connection was of vital importance to a country whose economic prosperity depended on a market being found for the produce of its sheep farms. In spite of the efforts of Henry I and his successors to foster a native weaving industry, progress in this direction was very gradual, and not for many generations was there any serious prospect that the demand of English looms would absorb the supply of English wool. The danger was constantly before the eyes of our rulers lest a foreign power, which at this time could only mean the Kingdom of France, should get enough influence or control over Flanders to force its clothiers to buy their wool not in the English but the French market. This is the real meaning of the perpetual dynastic intrigues over the Flemish countship and the chronic hostility with France, which our Kings were, in addition, baulking of her natural outlet on the sea by their control of the lower Seine valley.

But as yet the French Kings, in their landlocked demesne, were not strong enough to give serious trouble, and the power of the Conqueror and his sons was great enough, for the time, to establish a sort of vague suzerainty over our neighbours of Scotland and Wales. This comparative freedom from the drain of war gave our Kings a golden opportunity, of which they were not slow in taking advantage, to consolidate their rule over a united nation.

" A good man he was and there was great awe of him. No man durst mis-do against another in his time. He made peace for man and beast." Such was the verdict of his English subjects upon the stern and grasping Henry I. They were soon to have a terrible lesson in what might happen when the King's only direct heir was a daughter, Matilda, Countess of Anjou and Dowager Empress of Germany. The throne was seized, without much difficulty, by her cousin, Stephen of Blois, a good-natured soldier, but " he was a mild man ", says the English chronicle, " soft and good and did no

justice." Stephen was ready to promise anybody anything, but he was too shiftless to keep his barons in order or even to remain on good terms with the Church. Matilda was soon over in England, and during the scrambling and confused struggle for the throne between her and Stephen the barons broke loose from all control, and set up such a reign of terror as had not been known since the worst times of the Viking invasions. Everywhere they employed the forced labour of the country folk to build castles, which they proceeded to fill, as the English chronicler[1] tells us, "with devils and wicked men," who dragged peaceful persons to underground torture chambers in order to make them disclose their wealth. Some of these lordly desperadoes were capable of bidding defiance to the very God in whom they believed; one of them, a Fitzhubert, openly boasted of having hanged monks, and that he would grieve God by doing as much to the brothers of Malmesbury and sisters of Wilton. No wonder that men said openly that Christ and His saints slept!

The precise extent of the terror is not easy to gauge. That there must have been bright patches is proved by the great activity there was in the building of churches and monasteries. But the object lesson of unrestrained feudalism was terrible enough to burn itself into the consciousness of the nation, as deeply as that of military rule under Cromwell's major-generals. Englishmen must have heaved a great sigh of relief when at last Stephen, thoroughly tired out, consented to put himself in leading strings to Prince Henry of Anjou, Matilda's son and his adopted successor, a man thoroughly capable of curbing the anarchs and resuming the great centralizing work of the Conqueror and his sons.

The adopted heir, who also, thanks to his grandfather's matrimonial diplomacy, controlled more of France than the French King himself, ascended the English throne, on Stephen's death, with the title of Henry II. Again England was blessed with a scholarly and energetic sovereign. But about this Henry's energy there was something positively demonic. If by his English subjects he was beloved because, as they said, "he did good justice and maintained peace," to his courtiers he was a positive terror, never still for a moment, bursting the bonds of routine, dashing hither and thither as the mood seized him. And this energy, almost incredible to our modern notions, was accompanied by an equally incredible lack of self-control, so that the mighty warrior and subtle statesman might

[1] He lived in Peterborough, one of the worst districts, owing to the activities of the terrible Geoffrey de Mandeville.

now be seen giving rein to his temper like a spoilt child, now blaspheming like a lost soul, and again undergoing penance on a heroic scale.

To such a man the business of kingship became an absorbing passion; he would be master of his realm and make it a model to all others. Not even the binding force of custom and precedent could restrain his genius; he could create as well as maintain. He would be all that Henry I was and more. It was not long before he had stamped out the last embers of anarchy and restored the civil service to its normal working. The first ten years of his reign were, in the domestic sphere, years of consolidation; in the course of the next fifteen, by a series of bold and far-reaching measures, a reign of law was established such as no Western people had enjoyed since the days of the Caesars.

Henry II was fortunate in being able to draft his own laws as well as administer them. In fact he came as near to being an absolute monarch as it is possible for a King of England to be. The desire of the country for a strong government, and the additional power derived from the possession of half France, enabled him to stretch the limits prescribed by custom and precedent further than he might otherwise have dared, to crown the work of his grandfather by developing the King's household and court into an executive of trained officials and a bench of judges sitting in courts with functions clearly defined, and to plant the foundations of a legal system which was to rival that of Rome in influence, while based upon principles definitely national.

12

The Birth of the Common Law

The Norman Kings honestly endeavoured to maintain the English law as it had been under Edward the Confessor. But English law was cumbrous and out of date and not even uniform, for there was one law of Wessex, one of Mercia, and one of the Danelaw, and in doubtful cases that of Wessex had to be given the supremacy. With all the good will in the world, it was impossible for the Norman, with his methodical instincts and his highly developed feudal notions, to adopt such a system without transforming it.

The stronghold of English law was the sheriff's county court, where the law, or immemorial custom, was declared by the suitors. Even where the King deputed some special representative to try an

important case, it was through the machinery of the county court that he worked. Thus when Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, sued Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent, for the return of some lands, the case was tried by the King's commissioner on Penenden Heath, before the "county", reinforced by certain magnates from outside. To them the lawyer Archbishop pleaded his own case, as he had pleaded long ago in the courts of his native Pavia. Such a three days' experience must have been an education in itself to his hearers.

Even the new royal justice did not consciously aim at superseding the old dooms. But as early as Henry I's reign these were becoming more and more difficult to interpret, less and less suited to new conditions. The French-speaking clerks about the court made valiant attempts to reduce them to some sort of order, and a number of treatises, the first of the noble series of English law books, represent their not wholly successful attempts to formulate the law of good King Edward as amended by his Norman successors.

But the twelfth century was to see the advent of a more potent influence, and one likely to commend itself to encroaching authority. The Law of Rome was now being studied in the great schools of Northern Italy, which had already given us a Lanfranc. Since his time, however, the code of Justinian, the crowning achievement of Roman Jurisprudence, had come to the West, and the importance of its message to civilization was fully appreciated. It was in the troubled reign of Stephen that another of those scholarly Lombards to whom England owes so great a debt, one Vacarius, came to England, and is believed to have given lectures at Oxford on Roman Law. Whether at Oxford or not, lecture he certainly did, and Stephen, like the muddle-headed soldier he was, made an attempt to silence him, not with success.

He must, indeed, have been a singularly inept monarch who would discourage a system all of whose principles made for authority, for the very centralization which Stephen, alone among the Norman Kings, had failed to maintain against his feudatories. For the Roman Law is the voice of that iron bureaucracy which had succeeded in imposing peace and uniformity over the only civilized world it knew. It was the voice of Caesar, the all-powerful and divine sovereign, imposing his will and his system impartially upon Jew and Greek, Gaul and Numidian; it allowed of no variation and no concession to prejudice or local prescription, its grand aim was order, and it took no account of liberty. It is not strange that Kings

saw the advantages of such a system from their point of view, and that alongside the revived study of the civil law, the Popes, the real representatives of Rome, should have encouraged the parallel growth of the Canon Law, based upon Roman principles, centralized in Rome and ignoring all national boundaries.

With a French-speaking court and a monarch like Henry II, there might have been expected such a Romanizing of our law as enabled the French monarchy to advance from feudal impotence to the despotism of Versailles, and swept over the German states in the early sixteenth century. Nothing of the sort happened in England, and that Roman law was unable to take root in our soil is a striking witness to the persistence of that spirit of individualism which England has inherited alike from Saxon and Northman, and which runs like a tough cord throughout our history. She took just as much of Roman science and system as she needed to build up a law peculiarly her own, as much the voice of England as Justinian's code had been that of Rome. This law was called the Common Law, or the law common to all England, and in this aspect its development is strangely similar to that of Roman law. For the Romans had developed their jurisprudence out of the simple expedient of striking an average between the laws of the different nations with whom they did business. And so the King's judges, by a series of recorded precedents, gradually built up one common law out of the varying bodies of custom they heard declared in the provincial moots.

Roman law aims above all things at simplification, its spirit is that of the French minister who boasted that at any given moment of school hours, all the children of France were repeating the same lesson. English law, as its warmest admirer will scarcely dispute, has none of this merit of simplicity, it is jealously conservative of tradition, it bases itself upon the rights of the individual. The Englishman has always been suspicious of generalizations, the rights of man do not appeal to him, but he is going to have his own rights, or trouble will ensue. Even if he changes, he prefers not to admit it, but to pose as the restorer of time-honoured custom. To the Roman " what pleases the prince has the force of law ", the Englishman replies with Henry III's barons, " we will not that the laws of England should be changed."

Even Henry II, whatever Angevin blood may have flowed in his veins, is thoroughly English, or shall we say thoroughly Norse, in his respect for the established letter of the law. However much

he may change things in reality, he is always, in theory, standing for them as they have been, and not as they ought to be. He takes what he finds, and develops it with marvellous skill. Thus, in establishing that most national of all our institutions, the jury, he is merely taking an old expedient of Charlemagne's for determining the royal dues, and transplanting it to the judicial sphere. He is also building on the habit, sanctified by centuries of English precedent, of trusting in important matters to the judgment of the general body of suitors to the local courts. And he is following out the policy, towards which his Norman predecessors have been feeling, of calling in the aid of the small man—it would be premature to say the people—against the baronage. Not by new legislation but by the issue of new writs, he interposed the authority of the crown between the baron and his dependents, and that on the vital question of land tenure; if Front de Boeuf should oust plain Godric or Richard from his tenement, the victim can now apply for a writ of *novel disseisin*, by which the case can be settled before the King's judges by the verdict of a jury. And if Front de Boeuf is still recalcitrant, he may find himself liable to the formidable penalties attending *contemptus brevium*.

As with the land, so with the criminal law. Juries were empanelled not only to present lists of suspected persons, but also to determine the guilt or innocence of those who "put themselves on the country". The transition is easy to the great clause in Magna Charta by which no free man may be imprisoned or dispossessed or outlawed or banished or in any way destroyed except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land, a clause of which its authors doubtless did not realize the full implication.

England was fortunate in finding, in this most critical phase of her legal history, men of outstanding genius to record and interpret her law. Ranulf Glanvill, the justiciar of Henry II, was the first on the long list of authoritative jurists which includes the names of Bracton, Littleton, Coke, and Blackstone. For the century or so after Henry II's accession the general law of the land, the English Common Law, was in a state of abnormally rapid development, and the royal authority was being continuously extended, not by legislation, but by the issue of new forms of writ from the Royal Chancery. Roman Law, having accomplished its work, drops out of the running, but not without having left an evil legacy of its despotic simplification in assimulating the status of villeinage to that of slavery. Norman and Roman methods of straightening

out the confusion of Saxon tenures bore hardly on the common people, favouring uniformity at the expense of liberty. The only wonder is that the process was not carried further, that the Common Law, even in that French-speaking court, was able so quickly to shake off its Roman fetters. The Church, with her own system of Roman jurisprudence, was jealous of her civil rival, and, with more reason than Stephen, intervened to suppress it, for the Holy Fathers of the early thirteenth century were by no means minded to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

To an Ulpian or Papinian such a structure as the English Common Law would no doubt have appeared as mere chaotic barbarism. It had inherited from the Saxon all the verbal formality that had marked the proceedings of oath-helpers; there was a correct form for each action, and the slightest deviation therefrom would lose the litigant his case. It relied to an extraordinary degree upon precedent; records of cases were being kept before the close of the twelfth century, and provide the material for the classic treatise of Bracton. English Law did undoubtedly suffer from the want of logical simplicity, it was cumbrous, formal, and hopelessly complicated, but it was a living growth, rooted to the soil like one of those knarled and twisted oaks that stands proof against the storms of centuries. It grew with the growth of England, it was planted in her American colonies, and when her sovereignty departed, her law remained; it has proved the most beneficent gift that she has been able to confer upon her Empire of India; it has developed into a system of jurisprudence equal to that of Rome in the extent of its influence, and perhaps destined to surpass it by virtue of the individualism which, like that of a Gothic cathedral, is its informing principle.

13

Freemen in Arms

An axe was laid by Henry II to the root of feudalism when he developed the principle, first adopted by his grandfather, of substituting a money payment, called scutage or shield-money, for the military service by which a vassal paid for his lands. In the state of society under which feudalism had grown up, personal service was the most natural method of discharging obligations; the lord wanted to get his corn reaped by the only available labourers, the King had to get his battles fought by the only available army, that of his vassals. But with the gradual emergence of Europe from

the darkest age, the power of money increased, and it was more convenient to hire professional soldiers, who would go anywhere and, in the most sinister sense, do anything, than depend on the uncertain and undisciplined support of vassals, furnishing their own expenses forty days and no more. The Norman Kings had been well acquainted with the use of mercenaries; during the anarchy of Stephen's reign they had been imported in great quantities, especially from Brabant, and given the English a sufficient taste of their methods to arouse an undying hatred of any mercenaries whatever. Henry II had turned these ruffians out on his accession and, with one brief interval, kept them out. Their re-introduction by John was largely responsible for the hatred which united all classes against him at the end of his reign.

But Henry II's need of such support was imperative in what has been somewhat misleadingly styled his Empire. It was not an Empire, but a number of French provinces that he happened to include among his personal estates, and about which he was perpetually engaged in unprofitable squabbles with his own sons, and his overlord, the French King. For such campaigns the feudal levy was obviously impossible, it would have taken most of his allotted time for an English knight to get to the scene of action. For both parties, King and vassal, the payment of money down would be far more convenient. But with this, the last excuse for feudalism disappears. And while Henry was hiring mercenaries abroad, he was laying the foundations of a national army at home, by taking in hand the old levy of the people which had done good service to his grandfather and to himself. In 1181 he ordained that every free man, according to the extent of his holding, should be provided with arms, and that the inevitable jurors should be sworn in every hundred and borough to see that this was done.

Not every man, it will be observed, but every free man. The greater part of Englishmen were not free, but villeins, tied to the soil and without the protection of the King's law, except in such a sense as a dog enjoys protection at present.

Roman Law had drawn a hard and fast line between slave and freeman, and in this English law followed suit, ignoring the complication of semi-free tenures that existed before the conquest, and placing the villein on the same footing as the slave under the later, more humane Roman legislation—a creature to be treated kindly, but with no rights whatever, the chattel of his lord, the lord of the manor. Thus far legal theory, but in practice a more tolerable

state of things obtained. There was a custom of the manor, derived from a time older than the manor itself, and so deeply rooted in the soil that even the Norman lord could not, or would not, set it aside. There was the manor court, in which all the tenants, free and unfree, gave judgment. The Common Law was, in fact, supplemented by the local and customary law, out of which it had, for the most part, arisen.

14

The Influence of the Church

So far our attention has been fixed mainly upon the temporal aspect of human affairs, but we must not forget that in the theory of the Middle Ages, the temporal was to the spiritual as the body to the soul, and that apart from and above the State, with its network of feudal relationships and its nascent patriotism, stood the Church of Christ, binding all Christian men, bond and free, together in one mystic communion and fellowship. In practice, the Church of Christ was the Empire of Rome endeavouring to establish her law and her dominion over the children of her conquerors. Her weapons were not the less formidable from the fact of their being spiritual.

The idea that Christendom was one state was not only confined to the realm of political speculation. So far as the unifying force of states is the pressure of a common enemy, there are two senses in which this test may be applied to the Church. Rome had still her barbarians thundering against the frontiers. The faith and civilization of Islam confronted her; Moslem armies, wave upon wave, pressed against the defences of Christendom from the Bosphorus to the Pyrennees. On the left flank, the Byzantine Empire opposed its diminishing and somewhat inert bulk; the rest of the defences were under the command of Rome. During the dark ages, when that command was in abeyance, the enemy had pressed forward even to Sicily and beyond the Pyrennees; now, at the end of the eleventh century, Rome had so far rallied her forces as to launch a counter-offensive against the lost provinces of Syria and Palestine. From end to end of Christendom the summons was obeyed. Rome had recovered her legions.

But the Church had another struggle, just as real and just as critical, to wage in the spiritual sphere. As in our own time there is all too slowly emerging the sense of a common cause uniting mankind against the untamed forces of nature, so in the Middle Ages there

was a common cause of Christendom against the brute in man. The difficulty that the modern man finds in understanding his medieval ancestor is that he finds it almost impossible to realize how much nearer that ancestor was to the animal. The modern educated man has at least attained a measure of refinement and self-control to which the contemporaries of Hildebrand and Coeur de Lion were strangers. Members of our Royal Family no longer express their annoyance by foaming at the mouth and biting the carpet, nor do clerical gentlemen signify their disapproval of a newly elected Archbishop by dancing on his body. We have remarked in the Celtic temperament a headlong swiftness of transition from thought to action, but it must be admitted that by modern standards, the Nordic temperament had still a long way to go in the mastery of its passions. We do not say that we are better men than our ancestors, but that our moral problems are of a more subtle and complex order than theirs.

"We will master the flesh and its longings restrain" is apt to sound cheap and platitudinous to men who have learnt to restrain their grosser impulses as a matter of course. But in the Middle Ages the struggle between the flesh and the spirit was direct and terrible. Our own ideal of refining the senses to their utmost capacity for enjoyment would have been hardly intelligible in the eleventh century. The flesh was a tyrant with whom no terms could be kept, it must be utterly subdued and mortified. When that singularly worthless young man, Prince Henry, son of Henry II, was dying at Martel, he caused his attendants to strip him of his soft raiment and put on him a hair shirt, to tie a rope round his neck, and haul him out of bed on to a heap of ashes, where he received the last sacrament. Nay, actual lousiness was esteemed as a mark of sainthood; there is an unsavoury legend of how the Queen of France, entertaining the gorgeously robed Thomas a Becket, observed his sleeve moving, and insisted on knowing the cause. On the sleeve being untied, its inhabitants fell out on to the floor, where they were instantly changed to beautiful pearls.

Such was the grossness even of virtue in those days. The Church was indeed carrying on an uphill and heroic struggle in the midst of enormous evil; the little communities of monks had some reason for feeling themselves islanded in a sea of iniquity, or as sheep sent forth among wolves. The awful experience of Stephen's reign, when men said openly that Christ and his saints slept, is enough testimony to what the feudal magnate could be, once the bonds of control were

loosed. The Red King declared that he had got no good out of God and God should get no good out of him; even the good-natured Robert Curthose was reported to have starved 300 prisoners in Lent, and this practice of starving prisoners is one of which even the chivalrous Coeur de Lion has not escaped the suspicion.

The Church did at least set up a milder ideal against this universal violence and heartlessness. But her instruments were men, men of the same blood and like passions with the "devils and wicked men" she strove to convert. The danger was lest she, too, should be captured and corrupted by the world around her. Hence the extraordinary importance that her great popes of Hildebrand's school attached to keeping her free from the interference and jurisdiction of the State. Simony, or corruption in ecclesiastical appointments, was a deadly disease to be exorcised at any cost. The Church must have the appointment of her own rulers, her courts must be free, administering their own milder law in independence of the merciless law of the State. God must be allowed to have the things that are God's, the Bride of Christ must not be degraded into the harlot of Caesar. Such was the lofty ideal that inspired the Hildebrandine reformation.

The Conquest forced England into communion with the rest of Western civilization just when the religious revival was entering upon its most intense phase. And religion, at that time, comprehended the whole range of intellectual activities. An educated man was, with rare exceptions, a clerk, a man in orders, though not necessarily a priest or monk, and whatever culture existed was fostered and kept within bounds by the Church which, we must remember, was a mind-training association on a vast scale, as well as a spiritual empire, and even, to some extent, a business concern.

Such a society could not fail to soften, in the long run, the rigours of Norman domination, and by the mere fact of its standing above racial or tribal prejudices, act as a defence for the crushed and otherwise defenceless native populace. At first, it must have seemed as if the proud foreigner who displaced an English abbot or bishop differed all too little from his neighbour in the castle. But the baron was a Norman, whereas the Churchman, in so far as he was true to his calling, was neither English nor Norman but something transcending both, a Catholic. Moreover, as churchmen could not found families, the foreign element in the Church dwindled more rapidly than among the nobility.

It is customary to speak of the Roman Church, at this time, as cosmopolitan, but this is to widen its scope unduly. It was European,

or rather Western European, the spiritual successor of the old Western Empire. The feeling that inspired the Crusades would be more fitly likened to the old Roman imperialism than to what we now know as cosmopolitanism. But this sentiment was in conflict, or compromise, with the self-consciousness of smaller units, local or tribal, which were by no means minded to merge their individuality in the citizenship of a resurrected and spiritual empire. Neither Englishman nor Norman, Frenchman nor Fleming, was going to follow the example of the old Gauls and Britons by resigning himself to the status of a contented provincial. The triumphs of spiritual Rome—the humiliation of the Emperor Henry IV before Pope Gregory VII, the homage of John Lackland to Innocent III—were startling enough, but they were transitory and unreal compared with those of old Rome.

Nevertheless, the importance of this partial unity of Western Christendom can hardly be over-estimated. The Conquest, if it brought England under the heel of a foreign garrison, brought back to her clergy the knowledge of Latin, the medium of intellectual exchange throughout the civilized West. It placed at her service the organizing genius of a Lanfranc, the scholarship of an Anselm. It enabled foreigners to accomplish the task with which our own Alfred and Dunstan had wrestled in vain, of putting an end to the slackness and slovenliness that were the bane of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

This reformation first took the form of a strengthening, such as Dunstan and his colleagues had essayed with very imperfect success, of the regular or monastic element in the Church. It was among the parish priests, poorly educated and often married men, very much under the thumb of the local lord, that the seed sown by the Church was most choked by the thorns of the world. The necessary tightening up of ecclesiastical discipline was first and most easily effected among the communities concentrated in selected spots and withdrawn from the world for the avowed purpose of living an intensive religious life according to prescribed rules. The evidence of stones is conclusive on this point. There is comparatively little building of parish churches before the end of the eleventh century, but the monasteries and monastic cathedrals were already beginning to rise up in the majestic sternness and simplicity of the early Norman style.

It is only with the dawn of the twelfth century, when the distinction between Frenchman and Englishman was well nigh obliterated, that the revival began to affect the parishes to any

marked extent. Then, indeed, the impulse to massive and stately buildings was felt even in the humblest villages. An almost incredible amount of labour and skill must have gone to the expression in stone of what even the oppressed peasant must have felt to be his highest ideal. The parish churches, which are mostly in the late Norman style, with its profuseness of carving, have generally only been allowed to survive as part of some later building. It is only in rare instances, such as that of Stewkely in Buckinghamshire, or Barfreston, in the Canterbury district, that we are able to see with our own eyes what a Norman parish church must have looked like, in its aisleless and rectangular simplicity. The deserted church of Dode in Kent shows us a Norman parish church of the most primitive style—without carving and almost without windows, yet redeemed from plainness by sheer honesty of intention.

The twelfth century saw no slackening of the religious activity that was astir in Western Europe. The tendency of human nature to decline from enthusiasm to formula, to substitute the letter for the spirit, was the evil with which earnest reformers were continually at strife. The monastic history of the three centuries following on the foundation of Cluny consists of a series of attempts to formulate a rule of life which shall be proof against this tendency and, in fact, to devise a law to perpetuate the work of the spirit, as hopeless an attempt as that of medieval and Renaissance scientists to devise a machine for perpetual motion. In the same way the Church itself was perpetually endeavouring to make its organization proof against spiritual wastage. And no doubt organization could do very much to retard the inevitable and to keep some sort of Christianity in being through times of spiritual deadness, but just as an engine is kept working by a series of explosions, so the Church was kept alive by fresh bursts of spiritual energy, and not by the rules and systems into which that energy froze and petrified.

The Cluniac revival had tried to bring back to its pristine purity the old monastic rule of Saint Benedict. But early in the twelfth century the Cluniacs themselves incurred the censure of earnest Churchmen for the pride and splendour that were rife in their wealthy foundations. Accordingly, a reversion was made to a puritanical sternness and simplicity. A new order of monks, the Cistercians, of whom one of the founders was an Englishman, Stephen Harding, but which derived its brightest inspiration from Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, started a reaction against even a communal magnificence. By the end of Henry I's reign, they had commenced to found their

settlements in the remotest parts of the country, and particularly in those northern districts that had been laid waste by William the Conqueror. The good fathers were by no means content to save their souls in ascetic idleness; they were industrious and skilful agriculturists, and, most of all, sheep farmers, and their exertions not only helped to revive these wasted districts, but also to strengthen England's economic position by fostering her export of wool.

The Church, then, in England as elsewhere, was intensely alive throughout the twelfth century. It was a time of constant experiment and new departures. Her mind-training system was from time to time being brought up to date. Even the canons, the laxness of whose discipline had been the despair of earlier reformers, were frequently assimilated to monks by the institution which dates from the preceding century, of orders of regular canons. An interesting departure was that of the only purely English order in monastic history, that founded by Gilbert of Sempringham, which reverted to the old Anglo-Saxon practice of including both canons and nuns in the same foundation.

The most conclusive witness to the vitality of the Church is that of the churches themselves. We are apt to talk of the Norman style as if it were some fixed and determined thing, instead of being, as it actually was, in a state of continuous development for over a century. Indeed, it would hardly be difficult for an expert to fix, within a decade or two, the date of any fairly complete Norman building he happened to come across. The development is from the massive and imperial sternness of a conquering race to the joyous exuberance of native craftsmen free to express their individual and national personality. It is the light before the dawn of English Gothic.

The ever increasing exuberance of ornament received a salutary check from the Cistercian asceticism. It was the ideal of this order to eschew every form of deliberate adornment. The conscious pursuit of beauty was abhorrent to their notions of single-hearted piety. But the monks must have had beauty in their souls, for they loved to plant their monasteries not only in the remotest but the loveliest spots. And their denying themselves ornaments in their churches only compelled them to fall back upon the essentials of construction, and thus achieve a beauty of an even higher order than that which they professed to scorn. The Cistercian builders had no small share in preparing the ground for the transition to the pointed-arch style known as Early English.

So long as King and ruling class spoke a foreign language and

despised the name of Englishman, the European outlook of Rome might be indirectly favourable to the growth of patriotism in England. The Church was often the only power that stood between the common people, and the worst abuses of feudal tyranny. We read how the Bishops and learned men cursed continually the anarchs of Stephen's reign, too often in vain! Even Henry II, if he stood for efficiency, set up an iron bureaucracy which, if it curbed the magnates, bore hardly, both in theory and practice, on the common people. To our notions, the proposal of the Church to set up a jurisdiction independent of the royal courts seems, as indeed it seemed to Henry, sheer anarchy. That a clerk who had committed murder should be snatched from the arms of the law and that anybody who could read or remember the Latin version of the 59th psalm could qualify for a clerk, was a negation of ordered government worthy of Gilbert's *Mikado*. And yet, in despite of logic, it let in a gleam of mercy upon that hard time that must have been welcome indeed to those whose lives had little other alleviation.

In the Constitutions of Clarendon, the manifesto of royal policy that brought to a head the quarrel between Henry of Anjou and Archbishop Thomas a Becket, the Londoner who championed the extreme claims of the Church to be above the law, occurs the following significant clause.

"Sons of villeins should not be ordained without the consent of the lord, on whose land they are known to have been born."

The Church did, in fact, offer the only ladder by which a poor man could hope to rise above the disabilities of his class, even, like Nicholas Breakspear, to the headship of all Christendom. The one English monastic order, that of Gilbert of Sempringham, was, in particular, largely recruited from among the poor.

So that in judging between the King and the Archbishop, we must first clear our minds of modern prejudices. Both were true, but imperfect heroes, each was standing for a cause which he honestly believed to be essential to the welfare of the realm. Henry's Empire was to collapse, and his bureaucracy to turn to tyranny in the hands of his youngest son; Becket's Church was shortly to become a gigantic leech, sucking the wealth of the country to further a miserable crusade not against the Saracen, but against the Christian Commander of the Faithful. Whatever were the Archbishop's faults, the English loved him. "Blessed is he," they cried, "that cometh in the name of the Lord!" When, just before his murder, in his own Cathedral, by a party of superservicable "King's men", a knight brought him

a message from the court to quit London and return to Canterbury, "Will the King," cried he, "drive off the shepherd that the wolf may tear the flock? Let God see to it!" As one lingers among the cloisters of Canterbury, there comes before the mind's eye that tragically grotesque vision of the Archbishop being hustled along by a crowd of panic-stricken monks, and trying vainly to preserve the dignity of his office, or at bay in the gloom of the vast cathedral, foul-mouthed, struggling, and then bending his head meekly to receive a martyr's crown. There is the still stranger scene of the warrior and statesman, Henry of Anjou, his forehead pressed against the cold stone of the tomb, his back scarred with the weals of penance, crying like a child over the bones of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

Lastly there is the strangest scene of all, that of another English monarch, after the lapse of nearly four centuries, reversing his predecessor's verdict against himself, and casting the sacred bones out of the tomb no man knows whither. All three, kings and archbishop, were working, according to their lights, to ends not ignoble:—

> "in tragic life, God wot,
> No villain need be; passions weave the plot,
> We are betrayed by what is false within."

15

The Seed of Patriotism

While Saxon England was being conquered and held down by Normans, Brythonic Wales had not escaped scathless. Even while Edward the Confessor sat upon the throne, a Norman community had been planted on the Wye at Hereford, and it was not long before the expansive energy of the conquerors began to seek fresh fields. With the Norman came the castle, and this threatened checkmate to a foe whose strength had lain in ambushes and guerilla war among the mountains. Powerful earldoms, Chester, Shrewsbury, Hereford, were established upon the border, and in Northern Gwynnedd and Southern Deheubarth the chain of castles crept along the coastal lowlands. Then there was a surprising rally of Welsh arms and national sentiment. The anarchy of Stephen's reign weakened the intruders, and large tracts, including most of Gwynnedd, were recovered. Wales had all the tenacity of life that springs from a low grade of organization. She had the advantages of ambush and evasion afforded by her mountains, and she had, besides, a pride of race and tradition that made the very idea of conquest unthinkable to her sons.

The struggle for liberty fanned the national pride to a white heat, and produced a notable revival of native poetry, some fiercely patriotic, some tenderly sympathetic with the things of nature. We quote some examples from Professor Lloyd's classic History of Wales :—

> " The King of England came with his battalions—
> Though he came, he returned not with cattle."

And this

> " Gwalchmai am I called, a foe to all the English."

And, in a more tender strain :—

> " I love that sea-strand of Meirionydd,
> Where a snow-white arm was my pillow,
> I love to hear in the thickets of privet,
> The nightingale's note in the far-famed meeting of waters."

But not even the sentiment of nationality was capable of imparting to the Welsh that unity of action which would have given them their only chance, and that but a faint one, of preserving their independence once the full weight of England should be brought to bear upon them. A powerful chief like Llewelyn the Great might, by sheer force of personality, create the semblance of unity, but anything like an efficient central government could not be imposed on the tribes of mountaineers. Yet if England was, ultimately, to conquer Wales, there is another and just as important sense in which Wales may claim to have conquered England. Five and a half centuries after the last Welsh King had died, by an obscure hand, there was in England a poet who voiced, with singular accuracy, the sentiments and patriotism of his countrymen. This poet had certainly a rather vague and deprecating reverence for Norman blood, but when he wanted to construct something in the nature of a national epic, it was not to William the Conqueror nor Rolf the Ganger that he turned for a hero, but to the British Arthur, the shadowy lord of the Welsh Mabinogion.

That British and not French or Norman tradition should have come to be the theme for heroic legend marks the transition from a conquered England to one united in sentiment and a common pride of achievement. For though French may continue to be the language of the law and the educated class, this has no more significance, by itself, than the fact that Marcus Aurelius chose to write his reflections in Greek, and Frederick the Great failed to be a poet in French.

The Normans, ever adaptable, were not long in making themselves at home with their Welsh neighbours. Along the marches were

a good many men, like that engaging priest of the world, Gerald de Barri, who hardly knew their own nationality. "I am sprung," wrote he, "from the Welsh princes and Marcher Barons, and when I see injustice to either race I hate it." Such a contact was exactly what Welshman and Norman-Englishman needed to bring out the best points in both.

There was living, in the first half of the eleventh century, a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Monmouth, bearing the Norman name of Geoffrey, though he has been suspected, with some reason, of Breton antecedents, and has had his name rendered in Welsh as Griffith ap Arthur. We have no reliable information as to his origin, but in spirit he is certainly a Norman through and through, a Norman saturated with Welsh influences and Welsh tradition. It is owing to this fortunate conjunction that he was able to produce a book whose influence was not only British but European. He, in fact, took the old, dreamlike, Celtic Arthur of the Mabinogion, a shadow King moving among shadows, and transformed him, by a stroke of the pen, into just such a hero as the typical Norman lord had always dreamed of being. Even the ruffian Rufus had seriously discussed plans of conquering France, and had talked of some day crossing the Alps, and sacking Rome like another Brennus. What the Red King would have liked to do was just what Geoffrey's Arthur did.

The Norman was, in fact, what his buildings proclaim him to have been, a born imperialist. The original Arthur, if we grant his existence, had been a King or general desperately defending his native soil against an invader who could be at best checked for a time. But this defensive warfare no more sorted with the Norman ideal than Arthur's wild hunt after the Twrch Trwth. Geoffrey's Arthur is too practical to bother about pigs; with all the methodical energy of the Norman he reduces, in succession, the Saxons, the Scots, the Irish, Iceland, Gothland, the Orkneys, Norway, Dacia, Aquitaine, and Gaul, placing vassals of his own upon the vacant thrones. He is then crowned at Caerleon with a pomp and ceremony truly delightful to the feudal imagination. This modest programme having been fulfilled, it is now the turn of Rome. "How sweet will be even death itself," exclaims a royal follower of Arthur, "when suffered in revenging the injuries done to our ancestors, in defending our liberties, and in promoting the glory of our King!" Arthur does, in fact, annihilate the Roman army, and is just crossing the Alps when the news of Mordred's treachery recalls him to England and his last battle.

Geoffrey works up another British legend, which he may have found in the Welsh historian Nennius, and was destined to be of influence in the formation of patriotic sentiment. This was the supposed origin of the British from Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas. We have already stated our reasons for suspecting that this legend may have some substratum of historical truth, but it is only fair to admit its extreme convenience for the purpose in hand. Nennius had been a little hazy as to who Brutus really was, and seems to hover between a Roman consul and a patriarch, but the reason for making him a son of Aeneas is obvious. England wanted a hero who should stand in the same relation to her history as the pious Trojan to that of Rome. Hence springs a crop of stories about old Kings of Britain which have given to our tradition and literature such time-honoured names as Sabrina, Leir, Locrine, and Guendolen.

Never was a book more timely than this of Geoffrey. He may have been as consummate a liar as another chronicler, William of Newburgh, made out; his Welsh scholarship may have been as defective and his Latin as canine as his most ill-natured critics have maintained; all this will not alter the fact that he provided, just at the time when it was needed, a bond of sentiment strong enough to bind together Norman and Englishman as fellow-countrymen of no mean nation, children of Trojan Brutus, and heirs to the glory of British Arthur.

In the year that Geoffrey died, Henry of Anjou came to the throne. Such a dominion as his including, in one form or another, the British Isles and half France, might well claim comparison with Arthur's conquests, and demand such a legendary background. A Welsh poet had sung, in a line of tremendous impressiveness :—

"But unknown is the grave of Arthur."

The Norman was not content to rest upon the unknown. Henry caused the Gate of Remembrance to be opened at Glastonbury, and the remains of his distinguished predecessor were duly unearthed, in a coffin inscribed with full particulars of identification. This had the double advantage of providing our royal line with the actual bones of their presumed ancestor, and of proving to those Celts, particularly Bretons, who still looked to his coming again to deliver them from the Normans, that Arthur was well and truly dead.

Even the chroniclers of contemporary fact bore their part in helping to create a common bond of sentiment. Henry of Huntington, in some rather turgid verse with which his prose is interspersed, depicts England as calling on King Henry to deliver her from the

scourge of anarchy, and Henry as replying to the " Land of my sires " that her own red cross leads him on to win for her freedom and glory. William of Malmesbury, the leading historian of this time, though writing as a Norman, praises in eloquent words the courage of Harold and his men, and refers to England as " our dear country ", and Ordericus Vitalis, who was carried off from England at the age of nine to be brought up in a Norman monastery, never forgets to display his love for England, a love tinged with monkish pity. These things may be straws, but they show which way the wind is blowing.

It is in the writings of John of Salisbury, a churchman of English origin and one of the foremost scholars of his age, that we find an English patriotism, not to say jingoism, in the fullest, modern sense. John's conception of the State is almost innocent of feudalism, and he resembles no one so much as Herbert Spencer in his application of biological analogy to the social organism. To him the English are " our countrymen "—he has a chapter on the examples of valour given by " our countrymen ", another on the mischiefs that have befallen them through lack of discipline. Harold and Rufus, though for dynastic and moral reasons respectively John is bound to disapprove of them, have to be lionized as examples of national prowess. And John is very careful to point out that Henry II's army, that brought Stephen to terms, was of " our countrymen ". Those orthodox medievalists who delight in repeating their formula that patriotism was inconceivable to the medieval mind, must have some trouble in finding a convenient explanation for so uncompromisingly Bullish a John as him of Salisbury.

16

Magna Charta

Henry II, with all his ability, was not equal to the task of defending the ramshackle and heterogeneous collection of French provinces that gave him more French territory under his direct sway than his overlord, the King of France. There was no reason whatever for such an arrangement; even economically there was no community of interest to bind together the scattered provinces, and Henry lost his only chance of providing this when, early in his reign, he tried to get an outlet on the Mediterranean, found his French overlord barring his path at Toulouse, and drew back.

Already in France, a sense of nationality was awake, radiating outwards from the royal town of Paris, and as yet hardly affecting

the outlying provinces. Before the story of Arthur had begun its work of turning Norman to Englishman, minstrels were singing of Roland who had died for "sweet France". Paris, with her famous university, was already becoming the centre of culture she has remained ever since. The work of centralization and consolidation was going on briskly under the House of Capet throughout the twelfth century, and the new spirit was expressing itself, after the fashion of that age, in stone. March Phillips has shown how exactly the rise of Gothic in France corresponds in time and place with the growth of natural consciousness, and how the twelfth century Gothic cathedrals on the map give the impression of shots on a target whose bullseye is Paris. This awakening of Gothic energy, this fierce and riotous assertion of communal personality, sounded the death knell of the power which, for no reason except the higgling of the matrimonial market, was exercising a strangle-hold on "sweet France", and keeping her King from the possession of her fairest provinces.

The hour brought forth the man in the shape of King Philip Augustus, one of those typical French statesmen whose lives are devoted to realizing, with a ruthless and unscrupulous logic, a policy thought out on simple lines. Philip's idea was that of Philip the Fair and Louis XI, that of the great cardinals and Louis XIV, to unite as large a France under as strong a government as possible. He had behind him the nascent energy that expressed itself in the Cathedrals, the awakened self-consciousness of the towns with which he was careful to ally himself. The Angevin empire had as much chance of withstanding the outward pressure from Paris, as the eggshell when once the chicken inside has begun to peck its way out.

The details of the desultory feudal warfare, in which Henry was pitted against his own sons, egged on by Philip, are unimportant. What does concern us is that the long period of comparative peace, that had enabled our Kings to build up their administrative system, is now at an end, and that system has to bear the strain of chronic and ultimately hopeless warfare. So far from the French inheritance of the Angevins being a source of strength, it committed them to a task to which their resources were inadequate. Genius and energy could only postpone the inevitable crash. By the end of Henry's reign he was a baffled and beaten man, and had been forced to a humiliating peace with his sons and Philip, which, though it only lost him an insignificant amount of territory, had fatally revealed the weakness of his "empire".

His son and successor, Richard, who, as governor of Aquitaine and ally of Philip, had helped to bring down his father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, found himself in the same impossible position, A first rate soldier, he went in for fighting in much the same spirit as some modern gentlemen for big game shooting, and since the best fighting was to be had in Palestine, he recklessly added to his already excessive liabilities by going, in company with Philip and others, on a crusade, after having bled his Kingdom white to foot the bill. But Philip, who was in no sense a sportsman and knew exactly what he wanted, soon found an excuse to get home and was no sooner home than in defiance of his pledged word, he began operations against Richard's French dominions. His task was lightened by the fact that Richard himself fell, on the way home, into the hands of one of his own crusading allies, and needed a crushing levy on the wealth of his Kingdom to ransom him. The rest of his ten years' reign was passed in a sordid, cruel and on the whole successful war against Philip. The Angevin inheritance was preserved for the moment, and Richard endeavoured to perpetuate the division of the Seine valley by building an impregnable fortress overlooking the river, but in the task of postponing the inevitable he was exhausting the resources of his Kingdom, devising new and more drastic methods of taxation, conferring privileges right and left for cash down, putting a dangerous strain even on so powerful an administrative machine as that which had showed its efficiency by functioning smoothly during his absence and captivity.

Richard, who had now entered into partnership with a mercenary ruffian of the worst type and was engaged in an ignoble treasure hunt, had his expensive career cut short by a well-directed arrow. His brother John, who succeeded him, was, perhaps alone among our Kings, of an unmistakably criminal type. A born adventurer, he lacked for nothing in cunning and energy, but these inherited qualities were marred by the fitfulness and lack of concentrated purpose that are the inevitable handicap of the moral degenerate. He was soon in trouble with Philip, and stood by in helpless and resourceless apathy while that persistent monarch quietly appropriated one after another of John's French provinces, leaving him only the southern Aquitaine, which, being most remote from the national centre of Paris, was still capable of loyalty to an England that offered a market for her wines. The fact is that the resources of the England had proved definitely inadequate for the defence of half France, and the feudal magnates, without whose money and

man-power the King was helpless, had discovered the aristocratic equivalent of downing tools.

To add to John's embarrassments, he became involved in a violent quarrel with the Pope over the right to appoint an Archbishop of Canterbury. Relying on his foreign mercenaries and the strength of his administrative system, he successfully defied the power of the Church and the terrors of interdict and excommunication for some years, but the breaking point was reached when he found himself threatened with a French invasion, and with his baronage on the verge of passing from passive to active resistance. As a last resource, he tried a desperate but not unplausible gamble. He became the Pope's vassal, a more abject surrender than had been required of him, and thus having turned Rome from an enemy into an ally, tried to win back his lost provinces by means of an alliance with Germany, as represented by the Emperor Otto IV. This alliance was shattered by Philip in a decisive battle among the Flanders marshes at Bouvines. This disaster brought the disaffection at home to a head. John, who had been co-operating with the Emperor by invading France from the west, returned to England with his prestige shattered, his coffers empty, and his foreign policy in ruins. The discontent of the baronage now broke out in a flame of revolt, and they were joined, in defiance of the Pope, by the Archbishop of Canterbury and most of the higher clergy, and by a London which had already attained a large measure of self-government. Practically defenceless, John was driven to gain time by sealing the famous charter of liberties, presented to him by the rebels, and known to subsequent ages as Magna Charta.

Magna Charta is a document about which there has been much misleading talk. It has been described as instinct with an almost inspired wisdom, prompted by pure, self-sacrificing patriotism, and, more recently, as a mere reactionary manifesto, putting back the clock of progress. It would argue but small knowledge of human nature in general, and that of the feudal lords in particular, to imagine that the interpretation they would put on the law, when they had the King at their mercy, would be wholly disinterested. It is easy to point out that the " liberties " they safeguarded were, in fact, their own privileges as against the Crown, that the "lawful judgment of his peers " to which every man had a right, might easily be interpreted as putting the magnate beyond the power of the King's judges. But we ought to take a wider and more generous view of the Charter as a whole. The mere fact that it was accepted by

subsequent generations as the cornerstone of our liberties, that its confirmation was constantly demanded and its principles constantly appealed to, ought to save it from the charge of being merely reactionary.

The Charter is twofold in its intention. One part of it was not destined to survive John, and, indeed, was never put into effective operation. It consisted of an impracticable scheme for controlling an impossible King which, in effect, transferred the powers of the Crown to a committee of twenty-five magnates, along with other terms of surrender by which John had not the faintest intention of abiding. The other part was the real Magna Charta, which subsequent ages regarded with an almost superstitious reverence as the foundation of English, not to speak of American liberties. This was no dictated peace imposed by subjects on their sovereign, but set out to be a statement of an already existing law, by which the relations between sovereign and subjects were regulated. It amounted to this—His Majesty has not played the game; in future he must undertake to keep the rules, and in case there should be any doubt about it, here are the rules in black and white.

A charter of liberties was no new thing. Such a one had been issued by every one of John's predecessors since the Conquest, with the exception of Richard. That of Henry I had been peculiarly comprehensive, and Magna Charta was merely this document elaborated and brought up to date. It may not have seemed so great a thing for the most disreputable of English Kings to be required to follow in the footsteps of the Lion of Justice.

That the Charter is something more considerable than a mere incident in a struggle between tyrant and feudatories is due partly to the variety of interests John had united against him, which render it more of a national pronouncement than any of its predecessors, and partly to the English love of precedent that made it not an attempt to formulate a new settlement, but to return to the state of things that had existed under the two Henries. Credit is also due to the genius that inspired its composition, in which we may perhaps detect the hand of the public-spirited Archbishop, Stephen Langton. There is a grandeur and simplicity about its leading clauses that made them, as late as Blackstone's day, the simplest summary expression of the Englishman's fundamental rights. Such reactionary elements as crept in were not destined to survive. The writ *praecipe*, which called up cases of disputed tenure from the feudal to the royal courts was, indeed, abolished, but a writ was substituted for it under another

name. No lapse of time can, however, detract from the grandeur and relevance of such words as : " To no man will we sell, to no man will we deny or delay right or justice." The spirit of the Charter is, in fact, the spirit of England. The mere fact that it deals in a practical manner with concrete grievances, and that it appeals not to the abstraction that ought to be but to the custom that has been, makes it more English than ever.

In one sense, it may be true to say that the work of the Conqueror and the two great Henries was shattered at Runnymede. In a truer and deeper sense it was crowned and brought to completion. The task of the Normans, and particularly the Norman kings, had been to bring method and order out of slovenliness and anarchy. That order was now established on impregnable foundations. The administrative machine continued to function unimpaired, but so long as the Charter stood firm, it must function by law and not by any man's arbitrary caprice. And that law was not the centralized despotism of Rome, but the Common Law of English liberties.

CHAPTER V

ENGLAND A NATION

1

The Growth of National Feeling

John, with the Pope to back him, lost no time in tearing up the scrap of parchment he had sealed at Runnymede. His mercenary army was soon back again, and the baronial forces in arms against him were getting so much the worst of it that they offered the crown to Louis, son and heir to Philip Augustus of France. The accident of John's fleet having been crippled by a storm allowed the new claimant to effect the last overseas invasion of England on any considerable scale, and the tide of war had again began to turn when a surfeit of peaches rid the earth of John. This ended any chance Louis might have had of making good his claim; his summons had been a policy of desperation and now even the magnates had no further use for him. And while his English supporters were changing sides, his prospects of obtaining French reinforcements were gravely compromised, for unlike the Conqueror, he had left an unsubdued Dover on his communications.

And now a national hero had arisen in the person of Dover's defender, Hubert de Burgh, who, despite his foreign name, is entitled to an honourable place on the roll of English patriots. Determined to prevent a new French army from getting across, he roused the fisher folk in burning words. "If this folk lands, England is lost," he told them, and when they protested that they were only poor fishermen and not sea warriors or pirates, he added that they might hang him if he surrendered the Key of England. The fishermen were moved to tears; one cried "who is ready to die for England?", another answered "here am I", and presently the fleet, thus hastily collected, and far inferior in numbers to the enemy, was beating up towards Calais to get the weather gauge of him. A victory, as complete and decisive as Trafalgar, was the result, and Louis, cut off from support, was quickly disposed of. It is small wonder

that when, fifteen years later, Hubert had fallen out of royal favour, so beloved was he by the common people that a poor smith refused, according to Matthew Paris, to strike fetters on the man who had saved England.

This seafight off Dover is important not only for the fact that it prevented another foreign conquest of England, but from the evidence it gives of England having begun to find herself and to glow with a spirit to which it would be pedantry to deny the name of patriotism. The existence of this spirit is a fact which the modern school of historians, that has done such sterling work in transforming our notions of medieval history, is a little prone to obscure. It is after all rash to take medieval man entirely at his own feudal valuation. No doubt he was apt to explain every political relationship in personal terms, to talk of states as if they were estates and nothing else. It is also true that the country was as yet, in many ways, far from perfectly united; that a Kentishman might have found it as difficult to explain himself to a Yorkshireman, as he would, nowadays, to a Celtic-speaking Welshman; that the men of the Cinque Ports might have come to equal loggerheads with Normans, and Cornishmen or East Anglians, and that the municipal authorities of Bristol carried on negotiations with those of Winchester and of Rouen on much the same footing. French was still the speech of the court and the magnates, and the Church, with her centralized discipline and universal language, was still an influence making for a larger patriotism of Western Europe.

There were then many forces making against what we now know as nationalism, and particularly in the beginning of the century, when the magnates, the men who supported the French candidate for the throne, were only just learning to think and act as Englishmen. None the less the thirteenth century is remarkable for the vigorous growth of this spirit, which was never more actively in being than during the reigns of the third Henry and his son.

As early as the reign of Henry II, Englishmen were beginning to think of themselves no longer as a conquered but a conquering people, sons of Brutus and countrymen of Arthur. By the time Henry III came to the throne, England had severed most of her continental connections, and was beginning to acquire her own system of law, her national universities, and a flourishing export trade, besides having something like a national hero in that most un-English of sovereigns, Richard I. The new spirit was reflected in art, and above all in the most expressive of all medieval arts, that of building.

As early as the middle of the twelfth century, it had become evident that the old bottles of Norman imperialism could no longer suffice for the new wine of the English national revival. The awakening of French Gothic was bound to be answered by a similar outburst north of the Channel, since the same spirit of vigorous nationalism was astir in both countries.

For England had acquired what was even more important than a national hero in the person, or rather the remains, of a great national saint. The foreign ancestry of Thomas a Becket need not concern us ; to the medieval Englishman he was Saint Thomas of Canterbury, and the dramatic circumstances of his martyrdom in his own cathedral and of the King's penance at his tomb combined to bring pilgrims and—what the Canterbury monks cared for even more—rich gifts from all parts of Western Christendom to his shrine. By what was certainly, to the devout imagination, a natural consequence of the tragedy, four years after the murder the Norman choir, completed forty years before under the auspices of Prior Conrad, was consumed by fire. The monks at first thought of rebuilding it on the old lines, but in those days architecture was alive and not imitative, and it was impossible to put back the clock.

Seventy miles to the South East of Paris, at Sens, had arisen one of the first though by no means the most complete and ornate of the French Gothic cathedrals. From thence came to Canterbury the master-builder, William, in order to supervise the erection of a new choir and a sanctuary fit to house the shrine of so distinguished a martyr. He proceeded to teach the English masons to work in the new pointed style which was taking the place of Romanesque in his own country, and this combination of foreign tuition and native craftsmanship resulted in a building—the choir we see to-day—which is not only a beautiful work of art, but an important historical event, in that it bridges the transition from the Norman method of building to one that is not only in name but in fact English. The French master-builder was, with his work only half done, incapacitated by a fall from the scaffolding, and his work was taken up by another William, known as "the Englishman", who showed himself in no way inferior to his teacher. This English William, though the main lines of his work had already been determined, was by no means minded to be the copyist of his French namesake, and there is no more fascinating spectacle for the lover of architecture than to go from the Trinity Chapel, the Englishman's first independent work, to the side aisles and the Eastern Corona, and see him gradually

evolving a style at once national and individual, with slender detached shafts and graceful lancet windows.

Canterbury choir stands midway between the old style and the new, but the full transition was inevitable. The Norman, as the nation recovered spirit and began to assert its individuality, began to take on an ornamental exuberance altogether foreign to its massive simplicity, and provoked the Cistercian reaction in favour of discarding ornament altogether and concentrating on pure architecture. This had the effect not only of discrediting the methods of the old-fashioned Benedictines, but also of stimulating a search for fresh constructional methods, and the discovery of the greater freedom and energy implied in the supersession of the round by the pointed arch. Foreign influences, to which so centralized an order as that of Cîteaux was peculiarly susceptible, no doubt played their part in hastening the transition. It is notable, at any rate, that the new style comes triumphantly into being under the auspices of Saint Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, and a native of that Burgundy which played such an important part in the development both of the round and the pointed styles. The East Transept and the westernmost of the two choirs of Lincoln Cathedral, in their chaste and rather sombre magnificence, signalize the final break with the Norman tradition, and the birth of a style which is equally entitled to the names of Gothic and Early English.

Whatever may be said of Canterbury, here at least is an architecture that owes nothing essential to the imitation of French models. So distinguished a French critic as Viollet le Duc has disclaimed any suggestion of French influence in this part of Lincoln Cathedral. "The construction is English, the ornaments are English, the execution of the work belongs to the English school of workmen at the beginning of the thirteenth century." [1] In some ways, indeed, this choir of Saint Hugh represents a more advanced development of Gothic than anything in contemporary France. Its building occupies the last eight years of the twelfth century.

Another evidence of the growing sense of nationality is to be found in the establishment of our first universities. These institutions were of great and increasing importance all over Western Christendom, and their rise heralds the transition from a theocratic to a secular order of society. It is true that the universities were founded under ecclesiastical auspices for the training of clerics and were, in theory,

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May, 1861, quoted in Bell's Cathedral Series, "Lincoln."

as purely ecclesiastical bodies as the monasteries themselves. But there were clerics and clerics in the Middle Ages, and many who called themselves by this name were scholars and officials enjoying the status and immunities of churchmen, but in other ways little distinguishable from laymen. Upon such men the bonds of ecclesiastical discipline and corporate loyalty would be less potent than upon the regular army of monks and the staff of beneficed or paid priests. This independence expressed itself in two ways, first in a rowdy and aggressive nationalism, strikingly at variance with the super-patriotism favoured by the Church, and secondly in a liberty or boldness of thought that might easily lapse into heresy.

Down to the latter part of the fourteenth century, to speak of English university life is much the same as to speak of Oxford, for Cambridge, which was started by an Oxonian exodus during the troubles of John's reign, plays an altogether secondary rôle, and though attempts were made at starting other universities, they never got properly going. There were certainly schools at Oxford as early as Henry I's reign, but the main centre of attraction for scholars was the University of Paris, to which students of all Western nations congregated. However the growing rivalry between an England and France, each more and more conscious of her own nationality, was bound, sooner or later, to put an end to this state of things. It was when Thomas a Becket had fled from England and a not altogether unbiased French sympathy was aroused in his favour, that the English students appear to have been expelled, or at any rate to have migrated from Paris. From this time forth Oxford becomes a full-blown English university, a *studium generale*, as it was called.

" English " is perhaps too narrow a word, for students resorted thither from every part of the British Isles, the Irish being distinguished, even in those days, by an excess of rowdiness. The bitterness born of wars and oppressions had not yet entered into the souls of the four nations, and there seems to have been no particular obstacle, so far as we can judge by the evidence of Oxford, to the growth of a national sentiment embracing the whole of the British Isles. The " nations " into which the students grouped themselves for the purpose, largely, of chronic rows, lay North and South of the Trent line—Wales and Ireland counting as South.

The atmosphere of the medieval University was certainly the opposite of what nowadays we associate with the word " clerical ". There was in fact a proverb which ran,

" When Oxford draws its knife,
England's soon at strife."

The undergraduate of those days was a handy man with his weapon, and possessed a militant interest in politics which nowadays is more characteristic of the continental than the English university. It is no wonder that Oxford is found in the van of the struggle against foreign and Papal pretensions that went on throughout the long reign of Henry III.

2

The Church and the Nation

In the epoch of transition that is comprised in the fifty-six years of Henry III's reign, the main interest centres in the Church. The pontificate of Innocent III saw her at the height of her prestige and influence. It was no small triumph for the Western Empire, in its spiritual reincarnation, to have regained the formal sovereignty, not only spiritual but temporal, over the lost province of Britain. The King of England was the Pope's vassal, and had the Church found it possible to live up to her highest ideal, and make her yoke easy and her burden light, there is no reason to believe that such an arrangement would have been resented by the Englishman of that time.

For the English people, as distinct from the French-speaking aristocracy, had every reason for affectionate gratitude towards Mother Church. To some extent at least she had blunted the edge of royal and baronial oppression; the last of the good old English Kings was one of her saints, and her martyred champion, Saint Thomas of Canterbury, exercised more power from his magnificent shrine than he ever had from the chair of Saint Augustine. It was Saint Hugh of Lincoln who set up what Bishop Stubbs has justly characterized as a landmark in constitutional history by successfully resisting one of Richard's exorbitant war levies. It was Archbishop Stephen Langton who was the brains of the national movement that produced Magna Charta.

If the Church asked for allegiance and even money, she could fairly claim to have earned both by the services she performed. In that rough age she exercised an influence that was, on the whole, both civilizing and humane. Pope Innocent III presided over a General Council which at last succeeded in abolishing the barbarous superstition of trial by ordeal, and the Church also set her face against the Norman innovation of trial by battle. The Christianized version of Roman Law, called the Canon Law, which she applied

in her courts to the wide range of human relationships that fell within her jurisdiction, was kinder and more scientific than that of the lay courts. The universities were her training schools [1]; the noblest works of art and architecture were created under her auspices; such rudimentary science as emerged was the product of clerics, because clerics were the only educated men. A steadily increasing number of schools testified to the Church's activities in training up each rising generation. It was the Church too, and most of all the monasteries, that supplied a rudimentary system of poor relief, and was responsible for the numerous hospitals in which the sick, and particularly the lepers, were cared for, and which were counted by the hundred—so small a township as Berkhamsted, for instance, having no less than three.

If the Church could have concentrated peacefully on her civilizing mission, she might have maintained and even increased her power. But there was a rival candidate for the headship of Christendom in the German monarch who aspired to be Roman Emperor, and the long and wearisome struggle between the two was entering upon its final and most embittered phase. The last of the great Hohenstaufen Emperors, Frederick II, was more fitted for the fifteenth century than the thirteenth. He had all the sceptical and pagan spirit of the Renaissance, and was a man whom the Papacy instinctively felt it must crush at all costs. Towards the middle of the century, and particularly during the pontificate of Innocent IV, the Holy Father subordinated every other consideration to that of defeating and uprooting the House of Hohenstaufen. Like all prolonged life-and-death struggles, this one was ruinously expensive, and the Popes had to keep on raising money, from whatever source it could be obtained, regardless of consequences. When at last the Hohenstaufen were out of her path, the Church found that her spiritual arm was crippled; her provinces were becoming nations and made light of her claims to dominate their temporal affairs. But by this time the best of her work had been done.

Thus to the Englishmen of Henry III's reign the Papacy appeared partly as a civilizing and spiritual influence, and partly as a rapacious foreign power using her vassal province as a milch-cow. The situation was complicated by the fact that among English churchmen the spirit of patriotism was beginning to conflict with that of Roman super-patriotism. In theory there was no such thing even as an English

[1] Mr. Coulton's *Medieval Studies* have shown how defective that training too often was.

province within the Roman Church; there were two separate and independent provinces of Canterbury and York. Nobody as yet dreamed of questioning the allegiance owed by churchmen to the head of the Church. But theory and practice were no more necessarily the same in the Middle Ages than in our own day, and the demands of the Pope bore heavier upon ecclesiastics than upon laymen. The very Archbishop Langton whom the Pope had forced, after interdict and excommunication, upon a King of England, was one of the first to prove that a good churchman could also be a good Englishman, even to the extent of refusing to enforce a papal censure against John's insurgent barons.

Henry III's reign witnessed the growth of a militant nationalism even among clerics and magnates. The King himself was a weak and devout man whose very piety led him to play into the hands of Rome. He neither thought nor acted as an Englishman. He had still hankerings after restoring the old Angevin Empire, and his feeble attempts to accomplish this by force of arms were as unpopular in England as they were unsuccessful in France. But he had no hesitation in filling his court with foreigners, on whom he lavished his favours. This alone was an incentive to the disgruntled magnates to take their stand upon the principle of England for the English. And it is by no means inconsistent with what we know of human nature that they should have eventually chosen for their champion a naturalized Frenchman in the person of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, and brother-in-law of the King.

It was shortly after the King had, in 1227, declared himself fit to govern, which he neither was nor ever became, that the struggle between Pope and Emperor waxed acute, and His Holiness began to apply the screw to both clergy and laity. His claims were pressed with the ruthlessness and pertinacity of a Shylock. One legate, Otho, was said to have taken away with him more money than he left in the Kingdom. To extortion was added jobbery. The Papacy found an easy way of paying off its supporters by jobbing them into fat English benefices. To crown all, the Pope induced Henry to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for him by embarking on wild-cat dynastic schemes in the Empire and Sicily, to be financed with English money. Henry, who was at heart a foreigner and who cared less for his country than for the Church that had shielded him during his minority, proved his docility by confessing that he had neither the right nor the wish to oppose the Pope in anything whatever.

This, as a wise churchmanship might have foreseen, had the

effect of discrediting the Roman cause not only in the State but in the Church. The cry " it's your money we want " is no more popular in ecclesiastical than in lay circles. Thus we have the curious situation of the King taking the side of Rome and the more enlightened among the clergy that of England. One Archbishop of Canterbury, the sainted and scholarly Edmund Rich, actually went so far as to threaten the King with excommunication unless he would dismiss his foreign favourites, and stood up manfully against Papal extortion until at last his gentle spirit broke under the strain.

The greatest of all nationalist churchmen of this reign was undoubtedly Robert Grosseteste, a poor man's son who rose to be Bishop of Lincoln. He was the friend of Simon de Montfort, an ally of the Franciscan movement, and his eminence in the science of his day is acknowledged by no less an authority than Roger Bacon.

" A manifest confuter of the Pope and King," says the monkish historian, Matthew Paris," . . . the hammer and despiser of the Romans." He was, in fact, the nearest that age could produce to an Anglican High Churchman, sedulous in his assertion of ecclesiastical privilege, but firm against dictation from abroad. In 1251 he chose to be suspended from his diocese rather than admit an unlearned Italian to a benefice, and the next year we find him firm in resisting the demand of both King and Pope for a subsidy for a crusade. When told that the French had given way under similar circumstances, he drily retorted that twice makes a custom. Even if we reject, as unproven, the story of his final grand remonstrance to the effect that the Pope's power is only valid in so far as it tends to edification, a doctrine which Luther might have endorsed, we must at least admit the significance of such stories having grown up around Grosseteste. For though his unpopularity with Rome prevented an otherwise certain canonization, the people from whom he had sprung knew their champion, and at his grave, like that of his friend Simon de Montfort, miracles attested the common fame of him.

Open revolt against Rome was still a course hardly dreamed of in England, but the common people no longer looked to Rome as their shield against alien tyranny; her champion was no longer greeted with, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The appearance of a legate was as likely as not to be the signal for a riot, and the indiscretion of the legate Otho's cousin, a master cook, in splashing hot water into the face of an English beggar, produced the first recorded instance of an Oxford rag, in the course

of which a Welsh student succeeded in skewering the cook neatly with an arrow.

It was nine years later, in 1247, that a Parliament or assembly of magnates, lay and clerical, was held in London, from which letters of strong protest were sent, one to the Pope and the other to the Cardinals, signed with the mark of the City of London. For London, now indisputably the capital city, had suffered more than any other part of the Kingdom from the blundering partiality of Henry III, and her citizens were assuming the character they were to maintain for centuries, of the most intractable and politically alive section of the community. The money exacted by the Pope is, the remonstrance points out, wanted for defence against foreign enemies and to provide for the poor.

Impatience of oppression was by no means the only force at work making for national self-consciousness. The Common Law, not made, but begotten out of immemorial custom, had now definitely established itself as the law of the land, and was developing a complex and highly technical system, losing thereby some of its earlier adaptability. There was now no question of Roman Law becoming dominant in the King's courts, where the lawyers were already becoming a powerful and highly conservative body, with a vested interest in the tangle of precedent and procedure that they alone were competent to unravel. It is the age of Bracton, whose exposition of the laws provided English jurisprudence with its first classic, unless we are to include the treatise of Glanvill in the reign of Henry II.

The law was the King's law and administered in his court, or rather the separate courts into which the original court, or "Curia Regis" was, by a natural process of evolution, beginning to split up. But Magna Charta had already given national sanction of the most solemn kind to the doctrine, that the law is an independent entity, above the King himself. The idea had hardly yet dawned that the law was the product of human will, and could be altered at pleasure by whatever person or body of men happened to be sovereign. The Great Charter set out to be no more than a restatement of an already existing law which the King had set at defiance. And it was by a sure instinct that in times of oppression men should have turned to the Charter as to the bulwark of their liberties. For by confirming the Charter, the King was making his formal submission to that law, and to a law so broad-based on prescriptive right and so illogically complex that no tyrant nor benevolent despot could hope to bend it to his purposes.

3

An Experiment in Nationalism

In 1258 the accumulated grievances of the realm came to a head. The King's policy was discredited and his treasury empty. The magnates, lay and clerical, forced upon him a system of government resembling in principle the Whig settlement of 1689. The power of the Crown was to be transferred to an oligarchy, consisting of a number of committees. A clean sweep was made of the foreign favourites, and the ambitious foreign policy was replaced by a strict " Little Englandism ". But the system was too cumbrous to work, and the magnates had neither the unity nor the capacity for ruling the roost in the abeyance of monarchy. The members of the lesser baronage, the small country gentlemen, were by no means disposed to leave their destinies in the hands of their powerful neighbours, and with the backing of the King's son and heir, the future Edward I, thronged the court held next year at Westminster, and obtained an additional series of provisions securing the right of feudal subtenants from encroachments by their lords. A third estate—if we may use the term in the modern sense—was, indeed, beginning to raise its head, an estate that after many vicissitudes was destined to dwarf the other two. The machinery provided by the now obsolescent shire moots, and the long established habit of choosing representatives for a variety of judicial and administrative purposes, provided a means of overcoming the difficulty of getting from so large and scattered a body of constituents an authentic expression of its will.

It now only remained to add to the representatives of the country gentry those of the town burgesses to complete, so far as that age would allow, the Commons of England. This was accomplished six years later, when, after a confused time of experiment and personal intrigue, the differences between the Royalist party, to whom many of the magnates had now gone over, and the nationalist coalition of barons and Londoners, led by Simon de Montfort, flared up into civil war. The King started by getting the best of it and might have won but for the tactical genius of his opponent, who took him prisoner after a fight on the downs above Lewes, and held him, though with every mark of outward respect, a prisoner. Earl Simon was now virtually sovereign of England, and at once began to put into force a policy of thorough-going nationalism, including the protection of

English craftsmen by keeping English wool for English looms, which were not as yet anything like numerous enough to absorb it, and by inducing Englishmen to sacrifice convenience to patriotism, and clothe themselves in the coarse fabrics of their native country.

Simon was naturally anxious to establish such a policy on as broad a basis of national support as possible. It is for that reason that he summoned to a Parliament not only the magnates, lay and ecclesiastical, and two knights from each shire to represent the lesser gentry, but also two burgesses from each of a number of towns selected for their loyalty to his cause. There is no need to credit the Earl with any particular love for constitutional principles in the abstract, or desire to be the father of representative government, and little need to stress the continental precedents that he may or may not have had in his mind. He was merely playing what to a man of his intelligence must have been an obvious card in a dangerous and, as it proved, a desperate game. He was doing what every ruler of England has had to do, squaring those sections of the community who were sufficiently powerful to bring down his government if he did not. In spite of royal waste and papal extortion, Henry's long reign had been, on the whole, a time of peace and prosperity, and the towns, now fortified by charter against the worst feudal exactions, were increasing rapidly in wealth and importance, and could no longer be left out of the reckoning. Once they had come into the general assembly of the nation, they had come to stay.

Earl Simon's experiment of a nationalist government under his own auspices was doomed to failure. The magnates, though they had shown themselves capable of standing together for the law of the land, instead of separately, as in Stephen's time, for their private liberties, were too deeply infected with the feudal virus to hold together for very long, and least of all under one of themselves. Simon himself was not altogether free from the suspicion of family jobbery, and perhaps his foreign blood disqualified him from the English faculty of compromise. He had been but a year in the saddle when he found himself faced by the necessity of fighting the civil war over again, and this time at a hopeless disadvantage and against an opponent, the young Prince Edward, whose military genius was equal to his own. His little army, largely made up of Welshmen, was neatly pinned in the bend of the Avon at Evesham and cut to pieces with its leader. Some of his followers, however, held out long enough to secure a reasonable compromise and prevent an unqualified Royalist reaction. The virtual ruler of the country was now Edward,

who was as thorough-paced a nationalist as Simon, and capable of continuing the Earl's policy of ruling England by her own laws and as the interpreter of her will.

4

Gothic Christianity

The time when the Papacy was loosening its hold upon England, was one not of diminished but of increasing religious fervour. This may partly account for the fact that a course of long-continued fleecing and jobbery did not provoke even the suggestion of a break away from Rome such as occurred in the sixteenth century. If we were asked to name a time when the Church was at her zenith of enthusiasm and creative activity in England, it would be safe to put it about the middle of the thirteenth century, the time that saw the building of Salisbury Cathedral and the West front of Wells.

There had been a period of comparative barrenness in the first quarter of the century. The interdict of John's reign had produced an almost complete suspension of church building and decoration, and this, as it turned out, was all to the good, as the partial breach of continuity enabled the English masons and craftsmen to start with a clean sheet, and create a purely English style of architecture free from any lingering vestiges of the Norman tradition.

In France, as in England, the thirteenth century is the supreme period of Christian Gothic architecture. Philip Augustus had united the greater part of France and given her the rank of a great European power; his grandson, Saint Louis, presented the spectacle of the ideal Christian King, as Christianity was then understood, a warrior and statesman who allowed full scope to the chivalrous instincts of the French nobility, and the love of glory that is inherent in the French temperament. He was a crusader, at a time when the crusades were already becoming an anachronism, from no calculation of personal or national interest, but from pure, disinterested Christianity, and in two magnificent forlorn hopes against the infidel he strained the resources of his Kingdom to danger point. It is the great age of the Sorbonne, of the almost free towns, of the culmination of Gothic in such masterpieces as Rheims and the Sainte Chapelle. Such a France cut an incomparably greater figure in the world than an England struggling to realize her nationality in the teeth of misgovernment and papal oppression.

It is only natural, then, that we should look to France for the

full realization of the Gothic spirit, in an architecture of pure energy, displayed in towering heights and soaring vertical lines, in a visible and never-ending conflict of thrust and counter-thrust. It is the exact opposite of the intellectual beauty that informs the Greek temples and even in their ruins breathes of balanced thought and a serene philosophy. In a pure Gothic Cathedral there is about as much inducement to thought as in the rough and tumble of a well-contested tournament. There is heroic or saintly aspiration in the upward rush of the clustered stone; there is a depth of mystery in the cavernous, dark spaces; there is a riot of joy in the innumerable carvings and grotesques, in the stained glass of the windows, in the painted surfaces of the walls. But this architecture is no more disposed to reflection than Saint Louis in his blundering thrust at Cairo, or his fatal and futile landing in Tunis.

To the Gothic conception of architecture France of the thirteenth century gives the most logically complete expression. Her cathedrals rush skywards with a fierce intensity of aspiration; the conflict of stone is waged with an unrestrained virility; the whole building is informed by one concentrated and single hearted enthusiasm that makes it as harmonious a unity as the Parthenon or the Taj Mahal in their different kinds.

The Early English Gothic of the reign of Henry III has neither the outspoken virility nor the logical completeness of the contemporary French style. From this easily demonstrable fact some critics have been tempted to write of the English builders as if they were merely incapable of applying the Gothic principle, and as if the English style were something second-rate and inferior to the French. If the pushing of one idea to its logical conclusion were essential to greatness, the inferiority of the English to the Latin mind would follow as a natural consequence. The Englishman has a temperamental aversion from extreme views or courses; he would rather strike a balance between several than commit himself unreservedly to one. It is probably an impossible and certainly an unprofitable feat to prove the superiority of either the French or the English mind; to pit Amiens and Rheims against Lincoln and Wells displays as futile a prejudice as that of small boys who shout for Oxford or Cambridge on boat-race day.

Whether we are to praise or blame them for it, the English builders and the English people to whose deepest feelings they gave expression failed to push the Gothic principle to its logical extreme, not because they could not but because they would not. More than

one attempt was made to acclimatize the French style in England, the most notable of all being Henry III's favoured Abbey of Westminster, the East end of which that Gallophile and artistic monarch had planned on the French model of a rounded apse with its cluster of side chapels. Into one transept of Hereford Cathedral the Italian Bishop Aquablanca introduced a style more suggestive of Lombardy than the Welsh marches. But no importation of foreign architects or ideas could avail against the unformulated English determination to express the national spirit in the national way. The square apse, which the Anglo-Saxons had taken over from the Celts, survived every attempt to supersede it, and certainly produces an effect of spaciousness that makes the typical French apse seem cramped in comparison. And as in the larger buildings the French tendency is to culminate in a towering West front, so in England the mass tends to group itself round the central tower, with a suggestion of four-square immovability.

These, however, are but external and almost casual manifestations of profound and spiritual differences. What must be evident to every understanding student of our architecture is a certain reserve about the chief English buildings to which the French are strangers. This may partly be accounted for by the monastic associations of so many of the English cathedrals, and the tendency, by means of cloister and chapter house, to assimilate even communities of canons to those of monks. The English Cathedral is shut off from the world in its close, or enclosed space, whereas the French stands in the heart of the city, jostled by houses, and with its enormous doors inviting all and sundry to snatch a few moments of holy calm from the turmoil without. The whole spirit of the English building is typified by its deliberate withdrawal into the peace of the close. Not only are the heights less stupendous, the entrances less cavernous, but the openly displayed thrust of the buttress ribs is tempered, so that the form of the upper or clear story is more serenely apparent than in the typical French cathedral.

With the interior it is the same. Only in Westminster is there any real approach to the full steepness and uprush of the French Gothic, and even Westminster is, in this respect, a poor second to Amiens. In so typically English a production as Salisbury the eye is checked, as it mounts from floor to ceiling, by the restraining gesture of a continuous horizontal line at the base of the triforium. The interior of Wells, despite the exuberance and caprice of its detail carving, breathes an almost Anglican discreetness, there is such

a deliberate avoidance of anything that could be remotely described as tumultuous—here the eye is guided, as if by some invisible sacristan, along and not upward.

The English Gothic of the thirteenth century no doubt sacrifices much that is possessed by the French. Despite the modern school of critics that tries to reduce all building to the solution of technical problems, no architecture was ever great that did not give the most exact expression to the spirit that inspired it. The reason that French thirteenth century buildings are instinct with a full-blooded exuberance, a pride and joyousness lacking in our own, is partly because England had not the same pride of national achievement as the France of Louis IX, and still more because the English towns, usually with a royal or baronial castle to keep them in order and the hand of the central government heavy upon them, could not emulate the militant, municipal patriotism of the French communes.

Nevertheless these English buildings have a sweetness and solemnity all their own, that goes far to compensate for the more obvious attractions of the French style. If the stupendous West fronts and the towering interiors of Amiens and Rheims strike the beholder with an instant admiration that has something in it almost of terror, the charm of Wells and Lincoln and Salisbury is one that grows upon him with a more gradual and persuasive appeal. If it is English in its absence of logic and its occasional perversity, as in that irrelevant West front of Lincoln which masks the towers, it is English also in a certain undercurrent of melancholy, and a poetry compared with which the French style seems the most superb of rhetoric. And we must never forget that we see but the gaunt and mutilated skeletons of what were once veritable Houses of God, aglow with colour and enriched with ornaments long since despoiled.

The coming of a purely English style witnesses a revival of that art of figure sculpture in which the Normans, for once, had been unable to rival the achievements of the native craftsmen. In the thirteenth century the leeway was gloriously made up and the exuberant but rather crude enrichment of doors and arches in the later Norman style was replaced by an English statuary both admirable in itself and perfectly adapted to the general scheme of the building. The culmination of this art is the glorious West front of Wells, with its presentation of the Christian brotherhood or communion of saints; with Christ, his angels and apostles (a later addition) above; the resurrection portrayed in a frieze of

touching beauty, and below, the pick of God's elect, Kings and warriors, saints and ascetics, bishops and nuns and deacons, together with the promise and actuality of the Saviour's coming as revealed in His Old and New Testaments. Here at least it would be safe to say that nothing, even in the sculpture of the French cathedrals, can rival the scope and grandeur of this glorious conception, realized by native craftsmen whose very names have been forgotten, and at the bidding of a Somersetshire bishop, one of two famous sons of a small landowner called Trotman.

Those who doubt the existence of an English patriotism in the thirteenth century have only to look at what stares them in the face from this multitude of niches. The elect whom the craftsmen chiefly delight to represent and the people of Wells to see are not the " holy Norman Saints " on whose relics Harold was tricked into renouncing the succession, but such English worthies as Elphege and Erkenwald, Godric and Ethelburga, and instead of Norman Dukes, the company of sainted English monarchs, Edmund and Ethelred, Kenelm and Oswin, and many another, whose merits the proud clergy of the Conquest, headed by Lanfranc himself, had united in depreciating. It might be a commentary of Milton's declaration that if God were beginning some new and great period in His Church, He would " reveal it, as His manner is, first of all to His Englishmen ". Even the more than half French Henry III had no object nearer to his heart than to lavish wealth and skill upon beautifying the foundation of his predecessor, the last of the good old Anglo-Saxon Kings.

It was not only by stone figures that the churches and principal buildings were adorned. Medieval man was always a lover of colour, though his taste was more subdued than that which is fostered by the strong lights and clear atmosphere of Oriental countries. But to rest content with grey stone was not in his nature. Walls, windows, floors, pillars, sometimes even the stone figures, were coloured over as means or skill permitted. In the art of manuscript illumination, which is the foundation of medieval colour decoration, the Norman Conquest, so far from causing a breach of continuity, had a strengthening effect on the exquisite Anglo-Saxon treatment of flowing line. The school already established at the royal town of Winchester continued its work, and it is only with the coming of the thirteenth century that Winchester yields its supremacy to that great centre of art and learning, the Abbey of Saint Alban's.

Of the painting of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and of the earliest stained glass, the ravages of time and man have left

behind but pitiful fragments. During the twelfth century much of it is as crude as the statuary, but that unrecorded artists even in those days were capable of fine work is shown by such stray gems as the Saint Paul in the Anselm Chapel at Canterbury. During the thirteenth century the English primitives were creating a national style which entitles our native art to a more honourable place than it has yet been accorded. Such a masterpiece as the Madonna in the Bishop's Chapel at Chichester shows that the Anglo-Saxon tradition had never been lost, and that thirteenth century England possessed at least one master of the flowing line whose wizardry challenges comparison—to put it at the highest—with the best Chinese work of this kind. Hardly inferior is the Saint William, in the Feretory of Saint Alban's, a creation of exquisite tenderness, by one of that school of monkish artists for which the Abbey was renowned,[1] and by one of whom the Chichester Madonna was not improbably painted. Among the foremost artists of this school was the historian —the most vivid of his time—Matthew Paris.

It was not only the Church that gave employment to artists. Henry III, if he made a bad King, would have made an excellent President of the Royal Academy, and in the decoration of his palace of Westminster he displayed as much connoisseurship as in the rebuilding of the neighbouring Abbey. It is notable that the unpatriotic King could in neither the ecclesiastical nor secular sphere escape from the influences of his time. As the Abbey was devoted to the glorification of the last acknowledged Anglo-Saxon King, so the palace walls blazoned forth not only that King's coronation, but the exploits of the new national hero, Richard the Crusader. The prestige of English painting, and particularly that of Saint Alban's, is shown by the extent to which the art of Norway, a country closely bound to us by ties of trade, was swayed by its influence.

The fairest of all medieval colour effects were those that the light shone not on, but through. The stained glass window is a development of the Byzantine glass mosaic, the pieces being bound together by a framework of lead. Some of the earliest surviving stained glass is contained in the Ascension window at Le Mans, which was in the Conqueror's dominions and was put up not long after his death. Doubtless it was by this path that the art came to England, but no relics of it have survived of an earlier date than the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Of the thick and heavily leaded medallion glass, with its deep colouring and crude figure design, we have no

[1] The church of Toddington, in Bedfordshire, contains one of the best examples of what is obviously Saint Alban's work.

Chartres to show what its effect was like on a grand scale. The best specimens are in the Trinity Chapel and Corona at Canterbury, but the accursed zeal of the Puritan Blue Dick has denied us forever the opportunity of judging their effect when, as at Chartres, no light is admitted to the interior save through such a medium.

Of the great rose windows which are the crowning glory of the French Gothic Cathedral, the thirteenth century has left us only one, though a glorious example, in the "Dean's Eye" at Lincoln. It is with a pang of bereavement that we contemplate those petalless roses of Westminster transept, and think of what they must have been and might still be. But at least, we have one triumph of the glassmaker's art with which we may truthfully claim that there is nothing to compare in any place or period. This is the transept window at York, known as the Five Sisters. Here there is no attempt to turn windows into bibles; the glass is allowed to speak direct to the soul in its own language of pure colour. This art is no longer representative but musical, a music of light as subtle and intimate as any of sound. If we were asked what is the loveliest spectacle ever created by man, we might hesitate between the Taj Mahal in the moonlight, or the Five Sisters at that sunset hour when the great West window is a sheet of living gold and the East warm with deepest crimson and blue, and yet, facing Northwards beneath the central tower, we have difficulty in turning a glance either to the right or to the left.

Although the same principles were applied by the same craftsman to secular as to ecclesiastical art, the standards of the mid-thirteenth century are spiritual to a degree never attained in succeeding times. Thus there is comparatively little stress laid on individual personality, still less on the externals of rank and fashion. The figures of the great company of Wells are often hard to identify; we are just told, in the simplest fashion, "this is a King, or a Bishop, or a deacon or a queen Abbess," but in truth what we behold are less of historical characters than states of the soul. There is undoubtedly much that is sordid and grossly superstitious in the religious life of this time, when forgery was one of the most effective weapons in the Church's armoury and the trade in relics was pushed with a keenness that would put to blush the shadiest modern company promoter, but such as it was, the Church's teaching was, in England, implicitly accepted, and the drama of human salvation possessed an importance in the minds of men that the competition of worldly interests was destined gradually to diminish.

The parochical system, which had been comparatively neglected

at the time of the Norman Conquest, now, with the recovery of England for the English, not only made up the leeway, but was becoming the most active and vital part of the Church in this country, since the tendency of the monasteries was more and more to drop their pristine enthusiasm, and instead of being islands of holiness in the sea of the world, to content themselves with a fair, average respectability and the maintenance of their vested interests. Whatever may be said of the comparative merits of the English and Continental styles in the greater buildings, it can hardly be denied that in our parish churches we possess a wealth of beauty and historical interest unsurpassed of their kind anywhere. If anything can bring before us the reality of medieval civilization, it is to find quite obscure country villages and hamlets possessed of these buildings, each one in itself a treasure house of art and a mirror of taste utterly beyond our modern powers of reproduction, and to think of the labour and munificence that must have gone to their making.

The struggle of the Church for independence under her great Popes from Hildebrand to Innocent III, had borne fruit in raising the status of the parish priests. They were now in fact as well as in theory the local representatives of the Church and in no sense the " men " or private chaplains of some lay lord. Just as the Holy Father himself had had to secure his independence by the acquisition of territory, so the rector was in a much stronger position now that he himself had acquired the status of a small landowner, with a house and glebe as part of his benefice. The long battle for priestly celibacy which the Church had fought relieved her representatives from temptations to a divided loyalty. There were, of course, abuses that the Church from time to time tried to reform, and particularly in the practice of monastic bodies acquiring the patronage of livings, and filling them with vicars who lived, not on the proceeds of the benefice, but on a starvation wage.

Two features strike one about the religious life of this time, neither of them an innovation but each a strengthening of an already existing tendency. One of them is the enhanced splendour and ceremonial of the Mass sacrifice, the perpetually renewed miracle on which the power and prestige of the Church had come to depend. A study of parish churches will show in how many instances the plain oblong of the Norman church was enlarged or modified about this time for the purpose of providing a chancel in keeping with more exacting eucharistic requirements. The other feature, especially noticable in the large churches, consists in the

elevation of the Virgin Mary to the status, almost, of a goddess, as efficacious for most practical purposes and considerably more popular than the Members of the Trinity. The intense realism of the Middle Ages, to which the Persons of the Trinity were as real as persons in the street, could not stop short at the sort of vague reverence that is the common attitude nowadays. Not only Kings but also Deities were judged by results, and the Father, with His characteristics of wrath and implacability, might be feared, but could hardly be loved with any especial fervour. The Son was visualized as the damning judge of the future rather than the gentle Saviour of the past, and was understood to connive at the institution of Hell. It was only natural, then, for the ordinary sinner to keep his chief affection for the mild and tender-hearted lady who, as he firmly believed, was capable of wheedling her Son into overlooking all but the worst crimes of anyone who could get into her good graces, and who regarded human frailty not with the sternness of a judge but with the partiality of a mother and perhaps something of a woman's caprice. The wish being father to the thought, medieval man delighted in investing Our Lady with divine powers and dignity. Hence it came about that by the fourteenth century none of the greater churches was considered complete without the addition of a Lady Chapel, usually in the place of honour at the East End.

The vitality of a church, or in fact of any human institution, is to be measured, in the last resort, not by the excellence of its laws or system, but by the creative energy it is capable of engendering. Spiritually as well as physically, life proceeds not with smooth continuity, but by a series of explosions. And during its greatest period, the history of the Catholic Church is marked by a succession of great, creative efforts embodying themselves, finally, in some rule or system, and cooling down into routine. So long as these efforts were renewed and so long as the Church could maintain her mastery of them she had a moral force on her side that made her practically impregnable. The last two of these fresh leases of spiritual life, the last that the Church was to enjoy for almost three centuries, occurred almost simultaneously in the third decade of the thirteenth century.

The one cry that is common to all great Christian reformers, orthodox or heretical, is "Back to Jesus". In the whole course of Christian history, no man has come so near the spirit of the Founder as Francis of Assisi, and the Castilian Dominic, if his fame has been somewhat eclipsed by that of his more illustrious contemporary, was a single-hearted enthusiast with a genius for organization that

Catholicism reproduced so conspicuously, later, in Ignatius Loyala and Theresa. The two great orders known as Franciscan and Dominican had this in common, that they genuinely set out to attain the ideal of apostolic poverty and simplicity. The Dominicans were at first the more militant and intellectual of the two, the black hounds of the Church who drove out the wolves of heresy, for in Southern France and Italy heresy, the beginning of a pagan revival, was awake within the fold of the Church.

The Dominicans were essentially fighters, and where argument failed were quite ready to employ the sword of persecution. But the Franciscans, while the first glow of enthusiasm was in them, conquered not by striving but by the daily beauty and Christlike simplicity of their lives. While the Pope's legate was going about in state, with a bodyguard especially told off to protect him from the people, and filling his coffers with English money, the mendicant friars or brothers were also going about, begging their bread from door to door and having not where to lay their heads, as joyous and usually as illiterate as children, yet bringing physic and spiritual consolation to the poorest and most outcast of the people, ministering to the very lepers, who might not come within the precincts of the Church.

Both orders, like other human institutions, were all too soon to lose their first ardour; they were to produce the inhuman inquisitors and toad-eating "pardoners" of later days, but not before they had enabled the Church to escape the immediate danger of schism, and the Papacy, later in the century, to survive the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of its triumph over Caesar.

5

British Thought in the Scholastic Age

It is not only in stone that England's spirit finds expression during these years of dawning nationhood. During a period of great intellectual progress throughout Western Europe, her thinkers and philosophers are in the van. The University of Oxford was acquiring a reputation scarcely inferior to that of Paris and Bologna. It was, however, very different from the home of aristocratic culture and monarchial sentiment it was afterwards to become; no one, in the thirteenth century, would have ventured to call it the home of lost causes. Its students were mostly poor men, fired with a consuming zeal for knowledge, and in small matters as well as great,

robustly "agin the government". They were in the forefront of the nationalist movement against Henry III and the Pope, and the most revolutionary innovations in thought and politics are found in the works of medieval Oxonians.

When we talk of English or of Oxonian thought we must bear in mind that in no subsequent period was thought so European as in the days of the schoolmen. What is now an ideal after which we are seeking by such tentative expedients as Esperanto, was, in the Middle Ages, an accomplished fact. Latin was the universal language, and that it should have been so is among the greatest triumphs of the medieval Papacy. Despite the badness of communications and the ignorance of printing, there was an interchange of thought and thinkers between the different Universities far superior to anything that obtains nowadays. Wherever he might go, the man of learning found himself welcomed, appreciated, understood, so long as he could avoid the fatal imputation of heresy. The Lombard Anselm becomes Archbishop of Canterbury, Duns the Scot lies buried at Cologne, an Englishman, Baconthorpe, a connection of the great Bacon family, keeps alive the spirit of the Mahommedan Averroes at the University of Padua.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which we may speak of as definite a British contribution to thought as to architecture. Gothic is European but Early English is national; scholasticism is European but the spirit of Bacon, Occam, and Wycliffe is English, and this rich harvest of thought and building springs from the soil of a patriotism new-born. The twist that English thinkers give to European thought is characteristic of the English contribution to thought throughout subsequent ages. "Cut out the fine talk and get down to facts," has ever been the Englishman's motto. It reveals both his strength and his weakness.

The never-ending stricture that the English are lacking in ideas, is one that, if they understood its full bearings, few of them would desire to rebut. The facts of life are never simple, and even if they were ruled by logic, the premises are too involved and shifting to render chains of deductive reasoning a humanly practicable way of arriving at the truth. The English mind is resolutely inductive, and most of all in dealing with the affairs of life. Where the Frenchman talks of the Rights of Man, the Englishman talks of Magna Charta and bases his liberties upon precedent. The Frenchman in the story who wanted to write about the camel, dashed off to the *Jardin des Plantes* and thence to his house, where he composed an

essay sparkling with epigram and admirable in its lucidity—"*Le voilà, le chameau!*" The Englishman, after two years' research in the desert, produced a tome of valuable facts, too badly arranged for anybody to read. This fable gives us a clue to much in the history of two nations, whose gifts are not opposed, but complementary in the service of mankind.

The great controversy of the Middle Ages was specifically concerned with this very question of ideas and, as anyone acquainted with the history of the word might have divined, dates back to Plato. According to his philosophy, the ideas or archetypes of things are more real than the things themselves. What is essential about Tom, Dick, and Harry is their membership in the ideal or abstract man. That which distinguishes them from each other and makes up the individuality which alone interests the novelist, is to the philosopher an accident of minor importance. This out and out idealism was somewhat qualified by the more cautious and scientifically minded Aristotle, but the superior reality of universals over particulars is nevertheless implicit also in his philosophy. In the thought, as in the life of Greece, it is more essential to Tellos the Athenian that he is an Athenian than that he is Tellos.

This philosophy of Aristotle had pursued a strange course during the Dark Ages. Through the medium of the Nestorian Christians it had come to Bagdad, then at the height of its greatness under Haroun al Raschid and his successors in the Caliphate. Thence it had travelled to Mahommedan Spain, where it found the most brilliant of all its exponents in Averroes, who carried his belief in universals so far as to deny the immortality of the soul. For if the universal is the only thing that matters, it is only the universal that survives. Samuel Butler was unconsciously harking back to Averroes when he maintained that a man has no separate existence apart from his progenitors, and, in effect, that there is no more reason for postulating a separate immortality for John than for John's hair or wheelbarrow.

It was through Spain that Aristotle's complete works came to Christendom, though for some of them there were already direct translations from the Greek. They rapidly came to exercise a sway that put them almost on a par with the Bible and the Fathers. Aristotle was not a philosopher but *the* philosopher; the young Alexander would have sooner thought of questioning his authority as a tutor. than the doctors of the thirteenth century. The two intellectual champions of the Dominican order, Albert the Great

and Thomas Aquinas, used his logic to build up a system of universal philosophy worked out with amazing thoroughness and ingenuity. Such an intellectual *tour de force* as St. Thomas's *Summa Theologica*, not to speak of his other works, has probably never been equalled in its own kind. And one achievement of permanent value must certainly be conceded to these heroic logicians. If men are going to discuss questions of philosophy they ought to be quite certain that the words they use correspond, all the time, with the same definite things or conceptions. When you and I talk about God, it does not follow that we are both talking about the same thing. St. Thomas will distinguish and define with voluminous persistence until he has at least decided what the word God does or does not mean. So in discussing the still vexed question of distributive justice, nothing will satisfy St. Thomas but to go to the root of the matter by defining and minutely examining the whole conception of property.

The weakness of such a system of universal knowledge lay in its divorce from the facts of life. The instrument by which such knowledge was sought was formal logic; the material upon which logic was set to work chiefly consisted of the Bible, the Fathers, and the often villainously translated works of Aristotle. That philosopher had so far anticipated scholasticism as to force upon the universe of things an order which properly has its existence in the human mind, but he had at least applied himself to as minute and impartial an examination of the facts as was possible in his time. But while Aristotle had gone to life, the schoolmen went to Aristotle. The criticism not unjustly levelled at St. Thomas was that he taught everything but knew nothing.

The very genius of this friar in orders black, the completeness of his system and its almost impregnability, once its assumptions were granted, made it a formidable menace to any sort of mental progress. The Church delighted in it, on account of its unimpeachable orthodoxy. Hildebrand had claimed for her the Kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, but St. Thomas had gone even further, in asserting the despotism of her theology over the whole Empire of human thought. For in St. Thomas's system there is no room, outside theology, for philosophy, science or political thought. Whatever there is to know, he knows it, and what he does not know is not only not knowledge but probably heresy into the bargain. It was from the Dominican order that the inquisitors were mostly recruited.

To St. Dominic persecution was the hammer to drive home

argument. In this spirit he had informed the Waldenses, who continued to differ from him, that now gentle measures had failed they should have blows and plenty of them. More in harmony with the Christian spirit was that of St. Francis. Rigidly obedient though he was to Papal authority, his sweet spirit had nothing in it of the pride that imagines it can set up its human thought as the norm of the universe. The twin virtues of humility and love drew him forth to communion with the things of nature. "Don't hurt brother fire," he had said to some brethren, when the garment he was wearing began to smoulder, and they wanted to put it out.

All things, animate and inanimate, were his brothers and sisters. "Be Thou praised," he cried to God," on account of Sister Water, "who is very useful and humble and precious and pure." To minds constituted on these lines there could be no finality in a system of texts and abstractions from which all these brothers and sisters were tacitly excluded, and their study, in the spirit of humble curiosity which is that of science, debarred.

We are now in a position to appreciate the work of British thinkers in breaking the shackles forged by St. Thomas, and its harmony with nationalist resistance to the claims of Rome. The greatest of them, Duns, Occam, Bacon, are, as we might expect, Franciscans. The name of Duns Scotus, known by his contemporaries as pre-eminently the Subtle Doctor, survives, by the strangest vicissitude of language, as a term of scorn. Little does the small boy, made to stand on a form with the dunce's cap, imagine that he is being invested with the pointed head-gear of the great medieval sage. Duns has been claimed by all three nations, England, Scotland, and Ireland. The bent of his genius is, however, so characteristic of the Lowlands, that we may, without much hesitation, accept his title, "Scot," in the modern sense. At first sight Duns is more orthodox, more realist, and more remote from anything in fact or nature than St. Thomas himself. He is more thoroughgoing and consistent both in logic and metaphysics, less concerned with diverting his thought to a plausible conclusion. If his logic leads him to extraordinary or paradoxical results, he gravely accepts them.

With all his orthodoxy, St. Thomas had come dangerously close to subjecting not only nature but God Himself to the requirements of his system. Certainly God is almighty, but then He is also perfect, perfectly good and perfectly rational, and therefore only

able to act in a good and rational way. Consequently if St. Thomas, with his philosophy, can find out what is good and rational, he is able to lay down a line of procedure for God himself, and God becomes much the same in his system as the world-reason in that of Hegel. But Duns, with an inconveniently consistent orthodoxy, makes short work of this deity in leading strings. If God is to be both personal and almighty, He must be free in the widest sense. He makes the rules of the game, and a thing is good not for any quality it possesses in itself, but because God chooses to make it so. Just in the same way the workings of nature are the expression of God's arbitrary choice; He has chosen that the sun should rise in the East to-day, it would be just as natural for Him to start it in the West to-morrow. Thus, with ruthless logic, Duns offers, as the sole escape from the pantheistic rationalism towards which St. Thomas is drifting, an arbitrary universe under an arbitrary God.

Very convenient this, at first sight, for orthodoxy! For it follows that the only notion we can form of good is through what God has chosen to reveal, and the sole authority on earth for interpreting this revelation is God's Church, in other words, Rome. Therefore the whole duty of man is summed up in blind submission to Rome. But in fact Duns has furnished what amounts to the *reductio ad absurdum* of medieval theology. He has cut away from the conception of Deity its props of reason and goodness. He has demonstrated that it is impossible to prove God, he has made it impossible to love God. An arbitrary Supreme Being is revolting to human nature, and Duns has carefully excluded any other possibility short of complete scepticism. While ostensibly out-thomasing Thomas in his orthodoxy, what he has really done is to undermine the whole fabric upon which orthodoxy reposes.

The work accomplished by this Scot was, after all, negative. It was reserved for a strange, isolated being, an Englishman, Roger Bacon, to lay new foundations upon the ground which Duns Scotus was busy clearing. If we were better acquainted with the details of his early life, before he became a Franciscan friar, we might know the origin of that nervous, fiery disposition, so fatal in the Middle Ages, which impelled its owner to react with furious hostility against any sort of accepted authority, and with entire disregard of tact and prudence. Such a nature was born for suffering; first silenced and deprived of the very means of research or expression, finally languishing for fourteen years in a dungeon, all because he

had seen a little further through the darkness than his contemporaries, Bacon had small joy of his learning. But the heroes of thought do not work for reward.

Bacon was no modern scientist; he was a man of manifest imperfections, and if he rose above the limitations of his environment, it is but as a man, fallen by night into a bog, raises himself waist and shoulders above it, while the rest of him is floundering in mire. He accepted the current assumptions, that the end of all wisdom is to enable man to live according to God's will, and that all truth is contained in Scripture. He believed in astrology, the philosopher's stone, and the possibility of squaring the circle; his very philology, on which he laid such stress, is marred by the strangest errors. The marvel is that with all the handicaps that his time and contemporaries imposed upon him, he obtained such a Pisgah view of subsequent developments.

With true English practicality, he goes straight for the weak points in St. Thomas. He shows the absurdity of a blind acceptance of Aristotle through translations that distort his meaning, and how far the schoolmen are from following the example of Aristotle when they neglect nature. "If you want to know about God"—that is the gist of his message—"study God's works." The pompous and unnecessary parade of formal logic he scouts as a pedantic way of achieving what every man is capable of doing by the light of nature. Get to the facts, and let this grinding of wind be!

The third of our great British Franciscans belongs to the first half of the fourteenth century. This is the "Invincible Doctor", William of Occam in Surrey and Merton College, Oxford. A schoolman himself, he drives the last nail into the coffin of scholasticism by laying down that entities are not to be multiplied more than necessary.[1] The mere fact of a thing's existing is warrant enough for its reality. Thus did Occam, himself neither a constructive thinker nor a scientist, by mere insistence upon facts, as opposed to words, help to clear the path for a humanism more fruitful than the logical *tours de force* of the schoolmen.

6

The English Justinian

Earl Simon had fallen largely because of his own good qualities. They were the good qualities of the Latin temperament, firm in its

[1] Even if he was not the actual author of this phrase, it is implied in his teaching.

grasp of general principles but uncompromising and autocratic in their application. His conqueror, the lord Edward, who during the few remaining years of Henry's reign was virtually sovereign and who succeeded him as Edward I, proved, despite his foreign speech and blood, as thorough paced an Englishman by temperament as any scion of that West Saxon House from whom his name was derived. A magnificent figure of a man, standing six foot three, he was up to a certain point a sportsman and a gentleman. He was capable of that tender and enduring married love which is a feature of English life and English poetry, and distinguishes the English from the Latin conception of romance. He was kindly, open and impulsive in the expression of his feelings, perhaps a trifle sentimental at times. He was one of the first soldiers and organizers of his age, a legislator great enough to earn the title of the English Justinian, and prided himself on being a man of his word.

But he was English also in that his kindliness and sportsmanship were not proof against opposition to his will. When that was crossed, his conscience came into play. William Wallace, for loving his Scottish country more than his English King, was done to death not only with cruelty but shameful insult, and the Countess of Buchan, who had been so indiscreet as to place the crown on Robert Bruce's head, was exposed, by orders of the pattern of chivalry, in a cage on Berwick walls. Other nations have frequently surpassed us in unscrupulousness, but it takes an Englishman, when vital interests are at stake, to camouflage his real motives, even from himself, with all the sincerity of conscious innocence.

England at last found herself under a sovereign whose good and bad qualities were equally characteristic of her. For quite a generation after the triumph of Evesham, Edward's record is one of almost unbroken success. He takes up the work of his great-grandfather, Henry of Anjou; only now, instead of a foreigner setting up an efficient bureaucratic despotism, we have an Englishman, the type and hero of his people, acting in thorough harmony with them. Even their quarrels, we feel, are lovers' quarrels—a soldier-king, who can burst into repentant tears before his Parliament, is pretty sure of a warm place in the hearts of his subjects.

Seldom had an English monarch such opportunities of influencing the course of history, few would have been so capable of rising to them. What form our institutions would take still largely depended on the sovereign's personality. The decision of Evesham had put out of court, for the time at any rate, the idea of running the

government through a committee of magnates, and an effective Parliamentary control was far in the future. The King was thus left in control of the most powerful administrative machine in Western Europe. The bureaucracy which had grown up under the first two Henries had never ceased to develop, even under the feeble auspices of Henry III. It was now a fairly well differentiated system of government departments, with its own traditions and routine. In theory, however, the King was still a private lord on a grand scale; his Kingdom was his estate and his chief ministers were the officers of his household. Thus we find that Edward I's war-office, through which he financed and supplied the great simultaneous contest with Scotland and France, was none other than his wardrobe. The efficiency of this system was naturally dependent on the constant supervision of all departments by the royal householder.

The King was not only an administrator; he was also a legislator and even, to some extent, a judge. Towards the end of the thirteenth century English law was passing through a very interesting and critical phase of transition. During Henry III's reign it had gone far to establish itself as a system of national jurisprudence, with an individuality proof against time or the prestige of imperial Rome. English law had indeed availed itself of Roman scientific method, and the classic treatise of Bracton, who died in 1268, is inspired largely by his study of the Italian civil lawyer, Azo of Bologna. But by the time of Edward I's accession the English Common Law had taken to itself about as much of Roman jurisprudence as it could conveniently absorb, and from henceforth it was to work out its own development on lines definitely national. This insular tendency was increased by the growth of a legal profession, or rather gild, jealously conservative of tradition and steeped in the lore of English, judge-made precedent. And indeed, it must have required a lifetime of study to master the forms and conventions, whose accurate observance counted more than a just cause in securing a verdict.

When Edward came to the throne, he found this national law just beginning to take shape, and already becoming defined by the recorded decisions of its judges. It was, however, still waiting for a legislator to take a comprehensive survey of it and mark out the lines on which it should develop during the ensuing centuries. The initiative in such legislation could come from none other than the King himself, for neither a feudal council of magnates nor the Court

in Parliament was remotely capable of furnishing it. Edward himself was as much a lawyer, by disposition, as he was a fighter, and indeed was only too much inclined to limit righteousness and statesmanship by the letter of the law. But he was a sufficiently law-abiding king to recognize the necessity for a good law.

So thoroughly did he go to work that during his reign more was done—in the opinion of Sir Matthew Hale, cited and endorsed by Maitland—to settle and establish the distributive justice of the Kingdom, than in subsequent ages. " For ages after Edward's day," says Maitland, " King and parliament left private law and civil procedure, criminal law and criminal procedure, pretty much to themselves." [1] If we are right in holding that the spirit of our Constitution is that of the Common Law, and that the one has grown out of the other, this achievement of Edward's—and by far the greater part of it was accomplished during the first thirteen years of his reign—is memorable beyond that of any monarch or statesman in our history.

7

The Constitution on the Anvil

Those first thirteen strenuous years of peaceful legislation, during which the foundations of our English law were established for all time, saw only part of the great King's work for England. The two ideals that inspired him may be comprehended in the words, " order " and " unity "—that Britain should be one, and that all things within his realm should be ordered and settled on the best and surest foundations.

Edward is not only the English Justinian, he has also some claim to be called the father of the English Parliament. It was during his reign that Parliament began to assume the form which it has kept ever since of King, Lords and Commons. No doubt an immense amount of sentimental or misinformed nonsense has been written about this phase of our constitutional development. The word Parliament has, in the course of centuries, gathered associations of which Edward and his subjects never dreamed. Modern research has made it plain that the very word signified, to them, not half so much a body of representatives as—in its literal meaning—debate. They spoke of " The King in his council in Parliament ", meaning " in discussion ", or the " High Court of Parliament ", as who

[1] *The Constitutional History of England*, p. 19.

should say, " the High Court of Debate," and it was only gradually and after a great deal of experiment, that the habit established itself of applying these names to a particularly constituted assembly.

Whatever the underlying reality may have been, the theory of our thirteenth century institutions was still personal and feudal. The King was the supreme landowner, and he held his court, from time to time, just as every great or petty landlord held his. The King's court was a manor court on a grand scale, in which the tenants declared the law, justice was done, complaints dealt with, and matters of importance to the estate discussed and settled. But, however much we may agree to treat the State as an estate, there are differences between the two that make the parallel break down in practice. The lord of one or several manors knew, or could find out from his bailiffs, exactly what he had a right to demand in the shape of labour, produce, or customary dues. The custom of the manor was fixed; and after the occasional levy of arbitrary tallages had fallen into disuse, there was no question of the lord's coming, at irregular intervals, to coax or bully the tenants into granting extraordinary contributions to tide over alleged emergencies. This, however, was precisely what the King was under the constant necessity of doing, and as the loyalty of his subjects seldom rose to the point of conceding something for nothing, he was compelled to purchase supply by redress of grievances.

In theory the King was expected to " live of his own " like any other lord. If he wanted more than " his own ", he was asking for something not sanctioned by custom, something in the nature of a favour. Even under the most despotic Kings, the right to make unlimited calls on their subjects' property had been neither claimed nor conceded. Whether it was the Anglo-Saxon assembly of Wise Men or the Norman feudal court of tenants-in-chief, some body, more or less indeterminate in its composition, generally had to be consulted and, in fact, " squared ", before any levy, that was more than a matter of mere routine, could be imposed. The reason for this was not any reverence for constitutional principles, but the fact that to embark on any sort of taxation was a venture of considerable uncertainty and even danger. Nowadays, if we read of another penny or shilling being put on to the income tax, we do not openly defy the revenue authorities, though recent experience among manual workers suggests that an unpopular tax, even if sanctioned by Parliament, may prove so difficult to collect as to make it not worth the candle.

What is exceptional now was, for many centuries of our history, a chronic difficulty. Strong though an English King may have been, his power was not without limits, and by the time of Edward I, the habit of resistance to unpopular demands had become ingrained. During the fourteenth century we repeatedly find that it is one thing to impose a tax and quite another to get it collected. On the morrow of Edward III's great victory at Sluys, his minister, De la Pole, had to report his inability to collect a subsidy already sanctioned by Parliament. Just after this we find Parliament pleading that they must consult their constituents before granting more money for the French war, and promising to use their influence to obtain it. The expedient of a poll-tax brought on an actual rebellion in 1381, and then had to be dropped. Not only could taxes be refused but evaded. The medieval King had nothing at his command like the fiscal organization with which the Caesars had bled their empire to death. The collection of tenths and fifteenths was reduced to a farce by fraudulent local assessments, until the practice was adopted of naming a definite fixed sum for each local authority to raise in its own way.

Thus we find the King confronted with a situation of a kind that must be only too familiar to employers in modern labour disputes. It is one thing for a delegate conference to come to an agreement, it is quite another to get the men into the shops or down the mines on the strength of it. The Kings certainly regarded their first Parliaments much as a good employer regards a strong union, as a body by means of which he has the best chance of coming to a working arrangement with his people. He wanted to have some way of getting into touch with the nation as a whole, or that part of it, at any rate, which was capable of either payment or resistance. And it was not only money that the King wanted, though this was by far the most important of his needs. He wanted to feel that the nation was behind him in any important act of policy, as, for instance, when he had a special Parliament summoned to Shrewsbury to approve the condemnation of his prisoner, Davydd, the last native Prince of Wales.

This expedient of calling together representatives of his subjects, and getting them to pledge the money of their constituents, must have seemed a veritable gold mine to a needy King, and an unmitigated nuisance both to the representatives, who disliked, as much as any modern juryman, the imposition of a troublesome and thankless duty, and to the constituents, who saw in the whole

affair a device of His Majesty to touch them for money, and who, in fact, were sometimes not above bribing the sheriff to disfranchise them. The prospect of Parliament coming to overshadow the King was at first little suspected by either side. For the knights and burgesses, in particular, the only attraction must have lain in the fact of their being summoned to meet all the prominent people of the realm in the palace at Westminster, and perhaps, with very great luck, to be witnesses of something in the nature of a scene between the King and some great man, perhaps the Earl Marshal or the Archbishop of Canterbury. But the knights and burgesses had even less opportunity of debate or defiance in open court than the members of a modern jury, to whom their position offers a fair parallel. They were represented by their Speaker or foreman, and if they could not at once agree on their answer to any particular demand, they would leave the Palace and troop over the way into the Chapter House or Refectory of the Abbey, where they would thrash out among themselves what sort of answer they would instruct their Speaker to give.

It was still the King's feudal court that the representatives were summoned to attend—his Court in Debate. It was the same court that sat at other times without any knights or burgesses at all, and to which these representatives of the commons or communes were an occasional and not by any means a necesary addition. Sometimes it was a court pure and simple, at which the question of granting supplies was not even broached, but in which the King sat to determine important judicial or legislative business, and to deal with the complaints and petitions of his subjects. It would have taken a very far-sighted observer to guess that the silent and respectful commons, who crowded at the far end of the hall, would eventually have the game in their own hands, and reduce the Crown to a cipher and the magnates to a political anachronism.

And yet, barring accidents, such a process was dictated by conditions obtaining as early as Edward I's time. The key of the situation consisted in the fact that the King's resources did not permanently suffice for him to carry on the government without his having to supplement them by extraordinary means. To avoid bankruptcy and ruin he must obtain the money, not by force nor of right, but by favour of his subjects, whose representatives he had the best opportunity of approaching in his Court of Parliament. And this court, from the very comprehensiveness both of its composition and functions, was an ideal body for enabling the King to do

business with his subjects as a whole, and his subjects to treat with him.

The chief danger was that—as happened nearly everywhere else abroad—the King might succeed in striking different bargains with different sections or estates of his subjects, a method ultimately fatal to constitutional development. It was long before this point was finally decided, even in England. Among Edward I's devices was that of dealing separately with the English and even the foreign merchants. This latter was a particularly questionable expedient, since, in return for a liberal percentage of dues from the foreigners, the King used his royal power to break down the municipal privileges by which the internal and retail trade of the country had been kept in native hands. Even a private bargain was not invariably beneath the royal dignity. So late as 1370 we find Edward III addressing a series of piteous appeals to the Bishop of Carlisle. He has got a huge bill, he says, to meet by St. Thomas's day, " or else incur great dishonour and danger to our Kingdom," and later, the Bishop evidently proving unkind, " consider," urges the King, " our present necessity, which is so great that we can hardly write or express it."

But Parliament, unlike the foreign assemblies of estates that flourished for awhile only to succumb to the nationalist monarchies of the Renaissance, was based on strong enough foundations to be proof, in the hour of trial, against such a power as that wielded by the Tudors, and such pretensions as those of the Stuarts. Paradoxically enough, the very strength of the Norman and Angevin Kings made for the strength of the body that was ultimately to overshadow the King. For the strength of the Norman military power, and of the administrative machine fashioned by the first two Henries, was so tremendous as to crush out local and sectional pretensions to an extent undreamed of on the Continent. The practical independence of Flemish cities or German princelets or the outlying French provinces had nothing corresponding to it in England. Even the Church, which wielded so tremendous a power in the first half of the thirteenth century, was brought to heel when Edward I coolly informed the Archbishop of Canterbury that if the clergy pleaded immunity from lay taxation they would be denied the protection of the lay law.

It is only when sectional feeling is kept within bounds that patriotism has a chance to lift its head. The whole strength of the English Parliament, from its very beginnings, consists in the fact that it is the nearest approximation the Middle Ages could produce to the ideal of a national assembly. At no time was it in any sense

an assembly of estates. When the more recent additions, the members representing shires and boroughs, grouped themselves into a separate "House", the line of division was not that between a noble or priestly caste and mere commoners, but rather that between individuals qualified or chosen to be the King's counsellors, and that of members elected *ad hoc* to represent the shire courts and municipalities whose assent, though not as yet whose advice, it was expedient to secure for important decisions. Thus we have not so much to think of Lords and Commons in the modern sense, as a House of persons or—to adopt one of Professor Pollard's luminous phrases—experts, and a House of proxies for Communes or governing bodies.

The National Assembly—for such it was in fact if not in name—that gathered round the King in his Council in Parliament had, from the first, other business than that of unloosing the nation's purse-strings. It was also the court in which the King dealt with the petitions of his subjects. These petitions might come from any individual or corporation, and the King no doubt disposed of them according to his own discretion and the advice of his immediate counsellors. But the lever that this habit of petitioning gave to the Commons was not likely to be lost on such shrewd bargainers as medieval men of affairs usually were. If His Majesty chose to petition them for these extraordinary and unpopular levies, tenths and fifteenths of everyone's goods, surely the least they could do would be to return the compliment and petition His Majesty. It was only tentatively, and after a good many decades, that they advanced from individual petitions to petitions adopted by the whole House, and from thence the next step of presenting petitions in the form of Bills, to be accepted or rejected but by no means altered by the Lords and the King.

From the very beginning of Parliament, therefore, we find what we may call the positive and negative poles of constitutional development, redress and supply. Under whatever forms of respect or loyalty the fact might be masked, the King's necessity for supply was a lever that Parliament might use to levy constitutional blackmail on him to an extent only limited by the urgency of the need. The elements of kingcraft, as revealed in the light of history, are of the simplest. The powerful King is he who can live of his own, who can carry on the government out of his own resources without applying to his subjects. Once his expenses exceed his regular income, he is involved in a sea of troubles. The sovereign may possibly manage to increase his resources, either by a windfall of confiscated property,

like Edward IV and Henry VIII, or even by direct bribes from a foreign power, like Edward IV and Charles II. But speaking generally, the successful King is the one who practices strict economy, and above all keeps clear of that most ruinous form of expense constituted by war. Such was the secret of those two great Tudors, Henry VII and Elizabeth. On the other hand even a powerful sovereign like Edward III cannot indulge in a prolonged war without finding his power continually encroached upon.

The opposition between the King pressing for more than his normal income, and Parliament pressing for more than its normal powers, is one that, after many centuries and vicissitudes, can only be settled in one of two ways, either by a thorough-going absolutism, in which the sovereign can get what he wants without asking anybody —this was what happened eventually in most continental states—or by Parliament taking the sovereignty into its own hands and reducing the King (who strictly speaking is part of Parliament) to a crowned figurehead. That this happened in England is due to the fact that Parliament was from the first a true national assembly, as distinct from a concourse of estates. And for this we have to thank the strong, levelling policy of our foreign Kings, and the genius of that French-speaking Englishman to whom, of all English sovereigns, we can most readily accord the title of " patriot King ".

And yet it was the same Edward of whom, after his overthrow by Simon at Lewes, an upholder of constitutional principles had been moved to write, " O Edward ! You want to be King without law ; wretched indeed would they be who are ruled by such a king," and then, with an appreciation of the main issue that could not be bettered in the light of subsequent history, " therefore let the general body (*communitas*) of the Kingdom be taken to counsel, and what the whole (*universitas*) feels, let it be known." If the Earl Simon could, thirty years after his death, have been present in spirit at Edward's model of all subsequent Parliaments, well might he have echoed the words he had used when caught in the trap at Evesham :

" By the arm of Saint James, they come on wisely, but it is from me that they learnt the method ! "

CHAPTER VI

THE AGE OF CHIVALRY

1

Expansion in Wales

It is among the first requirements of statesmanship to gauge, as exactly as possible, the amount of effort that a community is able to put forth without exhausting its strength. Are the resources of England equal to the task of fighting Bolshevik Russia, or undertaking the defence of Singapore, or bringing cheap electricity into every home? If sovereigns and governments had been accustomed to such reckonings, who shall estimate the amount of waste that might have been avoided? As it is, we find history strewn with the wreckage of enterprises foredoomed from the start by lack of means.

This is the tragedy of England in the Middle Ages. We have selected the year 1295 as the turning point, because up to that time England's record had been one of fairly continuous progress since the Conquest. This is largely due to the fact that she had enjoyed, thanks to her insular position and strong government, a measure of peace denied to any continental folk. The burden of maintaining the Angevin inheritance had been taken off our shoulders by Philip Augustus. One easily repulsed invasion there had been, and civil strife, not of a very prolonged or obstinate character; riots and private feuds not even the firmest government had been able wholly to suppress. The Crusades, after the first, had excited no great enthusiasm in England. On the whole, we had got off lightly, and had built up strength faster than we had wasted it.

With Edward I, however, the process takes place which is often the accompaniment of a vigorous national life. Energy seeks an outlet; the people, having waxed fat and strong, desires to impose its will upon others. Edward himself was, both as a tactician and as a military organizer, far in advance of his age. The experience of the Barons' war had taught him that an independent Wales was a thorn in the side of his Kingdom that would best be plucked out once and for all; Scotland, with her disputed succession and her

close connection with England, was a fatally tempting prize; the door for our wool in Flanders had to be kept open at all costs; what was worst of all, a piece of the old Angevin inheritance was still left in the South of France. Edward was strong enough to crush Wales; he might possibly have done the same by Scotland if he could have devoted all his forces to her alone. But he was not strong enough to fight the French King in Flanders and Gascony, and the Scottish insurgents across the Border, and to suppress Welsh risings, at one and the same time.

Edward is scarcely to be blamed for his failure to estimate the strains that his social edifice was capable of standing, when we reflect that even his present-day critics seem as incapable as he was of realizing the impossible nature of his Gascon inheritance, exposed as it was to the full weight of a French attack, and only connected with England by a precarious sea-route. An attack on Gascony was a trick that the French King could always play to paralyze any English effort elsewhere. England had to raise forces to fight simultaneously on two or more fronts, and this was more than her resources or magnates would stand. Edward, bound for Flanders, orders the Constable and Marshal of England to lead an army in defence of Gascony; they refuse; their duty binds them to follow the King but not to go off on separate enterprises. "By God, Sir Earl," blazes out Edward, "you shall either go or hang." "By God, Sir King," retorts the Earl of Norfolk, "I will neither go, nor hang," and neither did he.

The first military venture to which Edward set his hand was defensible enough, as a continuation of the policy of the old Heptarchic Kings, whose object it was to master their Celtic Hinterlands. What the Romans had done with comparative ease in Wales, the English had been unable to accomplish in the course of eight centuries. Norman adventurers might plant their castles along the strip of Southern Lowlands; the Marcher Lords might gain ground in the East; but there was no permanent military organization capable of holding down the mountain tribes, and the feudal armies could only waste their strength against an enemy that would not fight and a country that could not feed them.

The thirteenth century had seen a considerable revival of Welsh power. The Princes of Northern Gwynnedd, from their headquarters in the Snowdon district, took advantage of England's domestic troubles to establish a supremacy over the whole of Wales, and Simon de Montfort, in his last campaign, had drawn his strongest support

from Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, who was strong enough actually to secure the recognition by England of his title, "The Prince of Wales."

When he came to the throne, Edward resolved to make an end of the Welsh nuisance once and for all. His practical English mind had no sympathy with the incurable incapacity of the Celt to evolve any stable system of government, and the Welsh law must have seemed to him little better than no law at all. He had all the English lack of sympathy for an ideal of life different from his own, and his attempts to force English law on the Welsh did not make his task of conciliating them any the easier. It was certainly with no qualms of conscience that he concentrated the whole might of England upon the task of annihilating Welsh independence.

The business was done with workmanlike efficiency in two wars, the first of which left Llewelyn crippled and restricted to his mountain fastnesses, the second, after English oppression in the annexed territories had moved the Welsh and their Prince to desperate revolt, completed the conquest. Edward quickly shed the feudal levy and relied, as much as possible, on pressed soldiers, meanwhile impressing labour to cut broad roads through the mountain forests which were more formidable than the enemy. The Channel sailors held the sea; armies closed in from divergent bases on the enemy's last refuge in the Snowdon district; the gallant Llewelyn lost his life, by sheer bad luck, in a skirmish; and Wales became, once and for all, a province of the English crown, secured by a chain of magnificent castles of the new concentric pattern, from Rhuddlan to Harlech.

But to make a formal conquest of a Celtic people is a very different thing from subduing its natural spirit. The very strength of its tribal organization, which is such a check to political progress, is what renders it all the more tenacious of its native spirit. Edward's attempt to force English law upon the Welsh was more or less of a dead letter, though more successful was his policy of encouraging the formation of towns, which, though at first mainly peopled by Englishmen, soon filled up with Welshmen. The economic development of the country was greatly stimulated, and Wales was able to carry on a brisk export trade in her raw materials, metals and wool. As early as Henry I's reign, a certain number of Flemings had been imported into the South-West, and gradually there sprang up the manufacture of a rough, but very warm, kind of cloth that went by the name of frieze.

In the country districts the pride of race and nationality lived on,

and the century following the conquest saw a revival of poetic genius. The old bards of the North, those fierce and ardent patriots, were indeed silent when the hearthfires of their princes were cold, but in the South another, less militant school, was shortly to arise, whose genius, touched by foreign and particularly Provençal influence, was essentially lyrical, delighting in the two great themes of nature and love. These bards, the untranslatableness of whose works alone prevents them from ranking with the troubadours and minnesingers, resisted all attempts to suppress them. When the Welsh muse seemed to be flagging and getting out of hand, Eisteddfods, or general gatherings of bards, would be called for the deliberate purpose of revival. Over one of the most famous of these, held about 1330, presided the greatest of all Welsh singers, Dafydd Ab Gwilym.

Of him we cannot refrain from letting George Borrow speak, Borrow, who used to carry a copy of the bard's works on his wanderings through Wales. "Ap Gwilym has been fairly styled the Welsh Ovid. . . . He was something more than the Welsh Ovid; he was the Welsh Horace, and wrote light, agreeable, sportive pieces equal to anything of the kind composed by Horace in his best moods. But he was something more, he was the Welsh Martial, and wrote pieces equal in pungency to those of the great Roman epigrammatist, perhaps more than equal. . . . But he was something more; he could, if he pleased, be a Tyrtaeus; he was no fighter—where was there ever a poet that was—but he wrote an ode on a sword, the only warlike piece that he ever wrote, the best poem on the subject ever written in any language. Finally, he was something more; he was what none of the great Latin poets was, a Christian; that is, in his latter days, when he began to feel the vanity of all human pursuits, when his nerves began to be unstrung, his hair to fall off, and his teeth to drop out, and he then composed sacred pieces entitling him to rank with—we were going to say Caedmon—had we done so we should have done wrong; no uninspired poet ever handled sacred subjects like the grand Saxon Skald—but which entitle him to be called a great religious poet, inferior to none save the protegé of Hilda."

After lying dormant for more than a hundred years, the Welsh spirit did flame up, during the first decade of the fifteenth century, in one wild passion of rebellion, under that mysterious lawyer and reputed magician Owen Glendower. He was believed by all Welshmen then and by some now to have been as uncanny as Merlin himself, to have had the power of making himself invisible. Nobody knows

what was his end, but strange stories are told of it. His very success seemed to have about it something magical; towns and fortresses went down before him, it looked as if England would be swept clean out of Wales. Armies were launched against him in vain; one great force of some hundred thousand men, with the future victor of Agincourt among its commanders, was dispatched to round him up, and found itself striking blows in the empty air—Owen simply vanished, to reappear in greater strength than ever as soon as his foes had withdrawn. Nor was the patriot bard lacking to the patriot hero. At Owen's side, and linked to him in close bonds of friendship, was the venerable Iolo, surnamed the Red, who had, in his youth, seen Ap Gwilym presiding over the assembled bards. He was, as might have been expected, a native of Northern Gwynnedd, and no small part of Owen's success was due to the patriotic ardour with which Iolo's songs fired his countrymen. And then the revolt subsided almost as strangely and inexplicably as it had arisen, the fire seemed to die out of it, the concentrated obstinacy that made a people like the Dutch capable of wearing down the pride of Spain was not in the Welsh nature. Gradually the resistance ceased and Owen, offered a pardon and a commonplace old age, chose rather to vanish out of human ken.

2

Expansion in Scotland

Edward I had successfully accomplished his task of subduing the Mercian Hinterland which, though it had taken the English some eight centuries and a half to complete, had been accomplished with comparative ease by the Romans. Now, with the consciousness of a nation behind him and buoyed up on the crest of its new-found patriotism, it was only natural that Edward should seek to round off his task by subduing that larger territory that lay beyond the Northumbrian border. When a minority, followed by a disputed succession, put the prize within his grasp, it would have been less than human if a man, constituted as Edward was, had refrained from seizing it.

Had he been wise, with a wisdom beyond that of his age and our own, he would have seen the inevitable tragedy that was preparing for England and Scotland alike. To hold down a territory so extensive and so difficult, against its will, was utterly beyond an English King's power. Even to hold the Lowlands had proved

too much for Rome. The flourishing Kingdom of Northumbria had been ruined in the attempt to expand northwards. Edward was confronted with a thing more dangerous than had faced either Rome or Northumbria, in the shape of a folk already keenly conscious of its nationality, and determined never to submit to

> " proud Edward's power ;
> Chains and slaverie ".

Amid the confusion of races, Goidelic, Brythonic, Pictish, Norse and Angle, it was a dynasty of the Goidelic Scots, out of Ireland, that ultimately came to prevail. But in conquering the East strip of the Lowland coast, the Scots had taken to themselves a conqueror. The fertility of the country, the constructive genius of its inhabitants and their superior access to English and Latin influences, made it inevitable that they should eventually come to the top. This, in fact, took place under Malcolm Canmore, or Big Head, the slayer of Macbeth, who had lived at the Court of Edward the Confessor, and who married a sister of Edgar the Atheling. From this time to the War of Independence the History of Scotland is, on the whole, one of steady progress under wise and capable Kings.

During all this time she enjoyed the blessing of a comparatively peaceful development. Her relations with her Southern neighbour were not unfriendly ; the Border had not yet become the cockpit it was to be later, and England was Scotland's best customer. There were, from time to time, claims to a feudal sovereignty of England over Scotland, but these did not do much more than act as pinpricks to stimulate the growing sense of Scottish nationality. The Scots were, in fact, ready to pay quite a considerable amount of cash down to Coeur de Lion, in order to free themselves from the homage which William the Lion had performed to Henry II. There was a similar trouble in the Church. Rome was always indifferent if not hostile to national sentiment, and would have preferred to put Scotland under the English Archbishopric of York. On this point the Scots did not hesitate to put up a fight with so formidable a Pontiff as the third Alexander, and in the end they got their own way, though a Scottish Metropolitan Archbishop was not appointed till long afterwards.

Meanwhile the royal authority was steadily being extended over the mixed assortment of races. The Scottish court, though it had no intention of being subject to England, had no hesitation in taking England as a model. Frequent grants of land had been made to Norman nobles, who had sometimes property on both sides of the

Border. Gradually South of the Forth and along the fertile Eastern coast up to the Moray Firth the King's Peace asserted itself over the old tribal jurisdictions. Even in the Highlands some progress was made towards establishing the royal authority. English law and trial by jury were imported into Scotland. Unfortunately, alongside the King's Peace a number of imperfectly subordinate peaces were allowed to spring up which, as James VI complained long afterwards, went far towards wrecking the Kingdom. Great nobles were allowed to possess a gallows for hanging men and a pit for drowning women, a privilege wholly inconsistent with either justice or sovereignty.

If Scotland was behindhand in that she had developed no Parliament, except the court of feudal tenants, she was also fortunate in not needing one. Her Kings, unlike their English rivals, did actually succeed in living of their own. The reason for this must be sought in the fact that Scotland was singularly free from war. The one task of this kind imposed upon her was that of clearing her Northern fringe of the remnants of Viking sovereignty. This was accomplished, without any excessive drain on her resources, during the thirteenth century. The Scottish Kings were less concerned with running after glory than in the development of peaceful activities. They encouraged the growth of burghs and of a trading class. A brisk trade sprang up with England and, to a somewhat lesser extent, with Flanders.

In Scotland, then, we see a native monarchy strong enough to make English ideals prevail among a population largely Celtic. Gradually we find the Northumbrian or Anglian influence becoming predominant over the whole of the Lowlands, while the Celtic tribal organization lives on in the mountainous country in the North and West that we know as the Highlands. The Celtic strain is certainly less pure here than in either Wales or Ireland, and the clan system is not precisely the same as the old Celtic tribalism; it is touched to a certain extent with feudal ideas of land tenure, greatly strengthening the authority of the chief. But these clans are handicapped by the incapacity of the Celt for constructive political action. Terrible warriors as the Highlanders always were, they were never capable, under their own chiefs, of forming a reliable army; they might win victories, but as likely as not the army would melt away on the morrow. Again, never could the clans be brought to combine. So late as the eighteenth century, a Macdonald would fight for Prince Charlie, while a Campbell would be for King George; never were Highlanders found in any quarrel without other Highlanders being on the

other side. This enormously minimized the peril they might have become to their more civilized neighbours of the Lowlands.

During most of the thirteenth century the relations between Scotland and England had been singularly happy, and there appeared every prospect of a peaceful union of the two crowns by the marriage of Edward's son, the young Prince of Wales, with the child who inherited the Scottish throne on the death of Alexander III. But this happy consummation was defeated by the death of this little Maid of Norway ; Scotland was faced with the calamity of a disputed succession and Edward began to cast about for other means to accomplish the union of Great Britain on which he had set his heart.

His policy was no doubt fatally mistaken, and frought with centuries of hatred and calamity to both countries, but his mistake will seem pardonable if we remember that it is one to which the most advanced historians of our own day are liable. Edward was a lawyer, and he reconciled his conscience and intellect to taking the personal fictions of feudal law for realities, and leaving out of account the great fact of national sentiment. According to his own lights and the principles of feudal law, he was acting the part of a just and upright King in maintaining his rights against rebels and traitors. But to a patriotic Scot it was unthinkable that the King of England should under any pretence or circumstances impose his will on Scotland, and events were to prove that Scottish patriotism was capable of becoming an ultimately irresistible force against any foreign invader, despite the fact that many of the Scottish nobles, of Norman descent and with possessions on both sides of the Border, were anything but patriotic.

There were a number of claimants to the crown, but the only serious ones were two Norman-descended lords whose family names were Bruce (or Brix) and Balliol (or Bailleul). Edward with his shadowy claims to overlordship was the natural person to arbitrate, and he did so with painstaking thoroughness, deciding finally on Balliol as King of Scotland with Edward as his overlord, a decision that, from a lawyer's standpoint, was by no means unplausible. Unfortunately Edward, with the true Englishman's instinct for putting himself in the right and exploiting it to the utmost, pressed his overlordship to an extent that Scotland had never known before, and treated the unfortunate Balliol as a veritable puppet King. This insult to Scottish national feeling was supplemented by a more material grievance. In 1294 the inevitable quarrel with France flamed up into open war, and the French King, who had got control

of the Count of Flanders, was able to close the Flemish market to Edward's domains, thus crippling the Scottish wool trade. To complicate matters still further, Edward, who could not afford to send sufficient troops to Gascony and who had to resort to violent and unconstitutional methods of taxation, had to deal in person with a Welsh rebellion. The opportunity was too tempting to be missed. The Scots threw off allegiance to Edward and made an alliance with France.

Furious as he always was at the suggestion of treason, Edward determined to cut by the sword this knot that diplomacy had failed to untie. One of his first feats, one that sounded the death-knell of Anglo-Scottish friendship, was to storm the most flourishing of her ports, Berwick-on-Tweed, and massacre, it is said, more than seven thousand men, women and children in the sack. The country was soon at his feet, her poor puppet King a prisoner, and the strongholds in his hand. This time there was to be no fiction of an independent Scotland. Balliol, under feudal law, was a vassal who had defied his lord, and to that lord his estate was rightly forfeited. The plain fact of the matter was that Edward, having conquered Scotland by the sword, intended to hold the country under martial law.

The situation was not unlike that which obtained in the Transvaal after our annexation of it in 1877, a stubborn people chafing under the rule of a martinet, the part of Sir Owen Lanyon being anticipated by Lord Warenne, a harsh governor and a feeble commander. It was not long before the patriotism of the Scottish people was fanned to a blaze, and the whole country was up in arms under a great national leader, William Wallace, who, taking advantage of Edward's commitments elsewhere, soon succeeded in leading Warenne into a trap and destroying the English army of occupation. The indomitable Edward was now faced with the task of conquering Scotland all over again. A desperately contested battle at Falkirk ended in a triumph of the English or Welsh longbow over the spear forest of the Scottish infantry, and after a few years' waste of blood and treasure the English king, who patched up his differences with France in 1303, was again master of Scotland, and this time tried the effect of as mild and conciliatory a system of government as was practicable under the circumstances.

It was too late. The spirit of patriotism was not to be quenched, and to hold down Scotland, with its inhospitable tracts of moorland and mountain, was even less possible for Edward than it had been

for the Romans. On one occasion he got as far north as Inverness, an empty feat when it was impossible to remain there. A new Scottish leader arose in Robert Bruce, a nobleman of a very doubtful record who got himself crowned King in 1306, and after some reverses, vanquished an English army under the Earl of Pembroke. The now aged Edward, with his finances strained almost to bankruptcy and his accounts in hopeless disorder, assembled an army at Carlisle, and was about to resume his Sisyphean task of conquering Scotland when he was struck down by the hand of death.

What was not to be accomplished by the hero-king was plainly beyond the capacity and even the inclination of his successor and namesake, an amiable waster who soon had enough troubles on his hands at home, and left Scotland to look after itself. Within seven years the key position of Stirling was the only footing that the English retained in Scotland, and even this was about to fall when Edward II, who had managed to obtain a windfall out of the plunder of the Knights Templar, marched with a great army to its relief. The King, who was as ignorant of military organization as he was of tactics, arrived with a weary and disgruntled army in front of Stirling, where he found Bruce in position behind a stream called the Bannock Burn, and without giving his men time to rest, blundered forward into the most disastrous defeat ever sustained by an English army at Scottish hands. Though it was some years before England would acknowledge it, Scottish independence was won, and it was now Bruce's turn to take the offensive in Northern England.

The net result of Edward I's expansionist policy in the North was that England had exchanged a peaceful friend for an implacable enemy, in constant alliance with France and always ready to take advantage of any English military commitment overseas to throw an army across the Border. The Border itself was now a belt of anarchy where chieftains of either side kept up a perpetual desultory warfare of raid and counter-raid. It is impossible to compute the waste of blood, of treasure, of the kindly fruits of civilization, involved in this long-drawn, unnecessary tragedy of a Britain divided against herself. The only gain that England has to set against all this weight of evil was one certainly not contemplated by her Kings. It lay in the fact that the King's difficulty was the Parliament's opportunity.

Scotland, too, has something to set in the scale against the ruin of her cities and the weakening of her government. Her trial in the fire of invasion taught her to value her freedom like no other blessing

on earth, it gave her a self-respect and pride of achievement that nothing could ever efface.

> "What, weeneth the King of England
> So soon to have all Scotland?"

The figures of her two patriot leaders, Bruce and Wallace, soon became immortalized in rude epics, the former by Barbour and the latter by Blind Harry the Minstrel, whose Wallace is to a large extent imitative of Barbour's work. Bruce, as befits his time, though scarcely his record, is a pattern of chivalry, a very perfect, gentle knight, the Sir Lancelot of Scotland, though he has as little hesitation as Napoleon in conniving at the slaughter of prisoners whom he cannot take with him. The language is not Gaelic, but the English dialect of Northumbria, which was to become the Scottish language immortalized in the songs of Burns. But "Scots wha hae" is not nobler music than Barbour's

> Ah, freedom is a noble thing!
> Freedom makes man to have liking,
> Freedom all solacé to man gives,
> He lives at ease who freely lives;
> A noble heart may have none ease
> Nor else nought that may him please.

The awakening of this flame was the most permanent and the best result of England's attempt to impose her will upon Scotland.

3

Expansion in Ireland

It would have been well if Ireland, like Scotland, had been able to find a champion capable of focussing the national spirit and of securing Irish freedom once and for all at some second Clontarf. This was not to be, and the twelfth century witnessed the beginning of Ireland's agony, the longest and most unrelieved that we have recorded of any nation in history, except the Jews. It is a phase that the most impartial historian cannot approach without some feeling of pity and, if he is an Englishman, shame. The wise Camden, writing in 1607, thus temperately sums up our record:—

"If I may be allowed to speak freely, the piety and wisdom of the Kings of England has not been more defective in any one thing than in a due administration of this province, and I may add, of all Ireland, as to the propagating religion, and modelling the state, and civilizing the inhabitants, which things, for many ages, have been

very little regarded. Whether this neglect is to be attributed to carelessness or parsimony I know not; but one would think that an island so great and so near, where the soil is so good and the pastures so rich, which has so many woods and mines, so many rivers and commodious harbours on all sides, convenient for trading to the richest parts of the world, with the customs and revenues arising from thence, and lastly, an island so full of inhabitants, and a people who, in respect of minds and bodies, are capable of the highest employments in peace or war, all these together (one would think) should deserve and challenge our future care."

The fact is that before Tudor times England was near enough to injure but not to destroy the Celtic civilization of Ireland. It had taken the whole weight of the nation to crush Wales, and this could not be brought continuously to bear upon Ireland. At the same time the utter lack of organizing power evinced by the Irish must, in fairness, be held partly accountable for the tragedy. After Clontarf, Ireland had the opportunity, had she possessed the capacity, of putting her house in order. Except in the Church, nothing of the sort was attempted, in fact the ambition of Brian Boru had fatally weakened the prestige of the High Kingship, which now became the prize of contending families. Even in Dublin the Danes were unconquered, and their settlements along the coast remained, like so many fortified bridgeheads, for the entrance of an invader akin to them in blood and sentiment. Had anyone in Ireland been capable of taking stock of the situation, he would have seen that the growing power of the adventurous and imperialistic Normans on her Eastern flank constituted a deadly menace. The Red King, in his wild way, had talked of bridging the Irish Channel with his ships, and making himself lord of the whole island. But the Irish, long isolated from the rest of Europe, had not been taught, even by the Danish invasions, to think out the necessity of national organization and national defence.

Meanwhile Celtic civilization throve and flourished all the more from the Danish blood it had assimilated. The Danes, as in England, brought with them the impulse to trade abroad, and flourishing sea-ports round the coast assumed an importance that in a subsequent age was too frequently testified by their ruins. Great fairs held inland supplemented the business of the ports. Numerous raw materials of the country were exported, and there were the beginnings of a cloth manufacture, besides the metal-work for which the Irish were justly famed. That this civilization was something more than

mere squalid barbarism is testified by the fact that nearly all the imports were luxuries. Lord Dunraven admirably sums up the matter when he says, "inferior the Irish were, no doubt, in those characteristics that make for cohesion and solidarity, but they were certainly not inferior in all that is comprised in civilization". Unfortunately, it was this one defect that ruined everything else.

Very gracious and beautiful was this civilization of Ireland between the overthrow of the Danes and the coming of the English. It was during this time that most of the legends of Finn and Ossian were produced; the profession of a bard was held high in honour, and great gatherings of the people in presence of the High Kings fulfilled the same function of keeping literature alive that was performed by the Welsh Eisteddfods. A church architecture developed upon national lines, not with the grandeur and uprush of the English and French Gothic, but of a quiet and familiar sweetness as befitted the character of the national faith. Beautiful decorative work kept alive the Celtic tradition, continuous since the bronze age, and included such masterpieces as the processional Cross of Cong.

During the first half of the twelfth century an attempt was made to bring order into the ecclesiastical chaos, and to institute a proper diocesan system. Prominent in this reforming movement was the friend of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the sainted Malachy, who brought the Cistercians to Ireland and strove to bring his native land into line with the rest of Catholic Christendom. But Rome was not to be easily disabused of the notion that the people of this remote island were uncivilized barbarians, in need of being subjected to her discipline by force. And when the only Englishman in all the line of Popes from Peter to Pius XI donned the tiara as Adrian IV, he appears to have remained enough of an Englishman to have issued a Bull granting the lordship of Ireland to so disinterested an apostle of civilization as Henry II. The genuineness of the celebrated Bull has been disputed, though the weight of evidence supports it, and its policy was endorsed by Adrian's even greater successor, Alexander III.

Henry, however, had too many irons in the fire to permit of his wasting his energies—Bull or no Bull—on an Irish crusade. But certain of his Norman feudatories enjoyed more freedom and less responsibility. The adventurers who had overrun South Wales were already seeking fresh fields for their activities, cramped as they were by a strong central power in England, and an enemy, in Wales,

too elusive to be subdued and too poor to be plundered. Their opportunity came in much the same way as that of the Emperor Claudius for bringing the legions to Celtic Britain. In the course of endless civil wars of petty Irish Kinglets—worse than ever now that the High Kingship was one of the prizes—a certain Dermot, King of Leinster, whose tyranny had got him expelled from his Kingdom, conceived the notion of coming back with any Norman lords who could be enlisted in the venture. They were nothing loath, nor was Henry sorry to kill two birds with one stone by getting rid of some of his most troublesome subjects and bringing Ireland into his vassalage.

It is improbable that Dermot had the faintest inkling of the woe he was bringing on Ireland. He was merely playing a particularly astute move in the endless game of tribal warfare. Had not Brian Boru availed himself of Danish aid ? The Normans, however, had come to stop ; the half naked Irish had no chance against these heavy-armed lords of war, and where the Norman planted his foot, the castle, before long, reared its head. The Danes in the Eastern ports readily assimilated with the conquerers, and these ports, and particularly Dublin, became the gates of Ireland, permanently open.

From the very first we see that fatal intolerance and misunderstanding which was to be so conspicuous a feature of English dealings with Ireland. We have had occasion to notice the not wholly ungenerous account of Wales by that sprightly churchman, Giraldus Cambrensis. A Norman in spirit, with his epigrammatic lucidity, Giraldus was half a Welshman by blood, which may account for the fairness of his description. Unfortunately he went over to Ireland as one of the chaplains of Prince John, and here he had no pride of birth to hold him in restraint. He saw Celtic civilization from the practical standpoint of a governing race, he saw only too plainly the Irishman's slovenliness and incapacity for organization, without any of his good qualities, his passion for the beautiful, his capacity for dreaming dreams, his Christianity. " Abandoning themselves to idleness "—it is Giraldus writing and not an anti-nationalist pamphleteer of our own day—" and immersed in sloth, their greatest delight is to be exempt from toil, their richest possession the enjoyment of liberty." The Irish are, in fact, to Giraldus, utter barbarians, without agriculture, arts or manufactures. " As this people inhabit a country so remote from the rest of the world, and lying at its furthest extremity . . . secluded from civilized nations they learn nothing and practise nothing but the barbarism in which they are born and bred."

If this was so to the cultured and intelligent Giraldus, what better could be expected from the rough men of action who were only too glad for any excuse to pose as champions of civilization, conquering the wild Irish for their own and everyone else's good! It was not long before the adventurers were followed by the King, who, after the murder of Thomas a Becket, had every reason for keeping out of the way of a possible excommunication, and was, besides, pursuing a line of policy which he knew to be agreeable to Rome. To cure what Giraldus calls " the enormous offences and foul lives of the people of that land " by bringing the chaotic Irish Church into line with that of England no doubt seemed as righteous a policy to the Popes as that of exterminating the Waldenses. The packing of the Irish Church with Englishmen soon excited protest even from Rome, as when, in 1217, the justiciar in Ireland was instructed that no Irishman should be elected or preferred in any cathedral, a procedure which called forth energetic protest from Honorius III. But England was near, and Rome far off and not sufficiently interested to stop the work of Anglicanization in such parts of Ireland as England could bring under her control.

The best thing that could have happened for Ireland, once the invasion was fairly afoot, would have been a complete conquest by the English Crown, and an establishment of the reign of law impartially over Irish chiefs and Norman barons. But the Crown during the Middle Ages was never strong enough to do this and seldom wise enough to attempt it. The Norman Barons, who were of the same stock as the " devils and wicked men " who had made a Hell of Stephen's England, were as superior, from the military point of view, to the Irish, as the Gaelic vanguard of the Iron Age had been to the bronze-using aborigines in the twilight of history. The chronic strife among the Irish clans prevented anything like an organized national resistance to the foreigner. The treachery of Dermot was no isolated phenomenon, and the last High King of Ireland had to deal with a Norman invasion aided and abetted by his own son, whom he subsequently captured and blinded. It is no wonder that under these circumstances the new conquistadors penetrated every province of Ireland, picking out the fairest lands, and blighting the gracious civilization that had flourished for so many centuries.

But the Norman baronage, with which the Kings found it hard enough to cope even at home, was not likely, in distant Ireland, to be any more loyal to the court at Westminster, nor had the Kings

of England the resources, either in men or in money, to make their sway permanently effective in Ireland. Their best chance was to make friends of the Irish themselves, and to insist upon fair play and equal law for both races alike. It is one of the few things to be said in favour of the disreputable John that, during the time of his excommunication, he did make a serious attempt to set up an effective government in Ireland, with the traditional English organization of counties and sheriffs, and that in the course of a whirlwind expedition through the country he made it clear that Ireland had at last a King who meant to be obeyed. But John's difficulties at home loosened his control of the Irish as well as of the English baronage, and Henry III was never strong enough during his long reign in England to be much more than a cipher in Ireland. And so matters took their course; the barons, playing each for his own hand, oppressed the Irish and carried on their feuds against each other with little hindrance, and a despairing attempt of the three principal Irish families to sink their differences and restore the High Kingship was quenched in blood.

The turning point of England's fortunes in Ireland comes in the reign of Edward I. The English Justinian, whose supreme hope it was to unite the whole of the British Isles under his sway, was sincerely desirous that his Irish subjects should enjoy the same blessings of law and a High Court of Parliament as existed in England. But Edward, whose energies were more than fully employed at home, was not able to govern Ireland in person, and was consequently at the mercy of his subordinates. And he had that peculiarly English lack of imaginative sympathy for "native" ideals or institutions. The law which he wished to impose on Ireland was English law; the old Brehon law was a "damnable law that is no law, hateful to God and man". But to abolish the Brehon law was to deprive the ordinary Irish clansman of his communal, but none the less genuine, rights in the land, and to make it the private property of the chief or the feudal lord who superseded the chief.

The spirit by which Edward and his servants were actuated is only too plainly revealed when Robert de Ufford, the Justiciar or viceroy, was summoned to England to account for the murderous success of his policy of sowing dissension between the native chiefs. Robert coolly replied that he thought it expedient that one knave should cut off another. Edward, whose English sense of humour was evidently tickled by this remark, merely smiled and sent back the viceroy to his post without more ado.

Nevertheless Edward did at last find a viceroy who was also a statesman in Sir John Wogan, and in 1297 a Parliament representing settlers under the English law was set up in Dublin, copied from the Model Parliament at Westminster of two years before. But it was impossible to pursue any consistent line of policy whatever under the hopeless conditions that prevailed during the twenty years of Edward II's reign, and the threads that had been gathered up by the strong King and his viceroy dropped from the hands of their successors. Indeed the Irish were presented with a golden opportunity of freeing themselves from English rule altogether, when the redoubtable Robert Bruce, not content with hurling the English out of Scotland, dispatched his brother Edward, with an excellent army of trained soldiers, to act as the deliverer of Ireland. But it was the old story. The Irish were as incapable as ever of sinking their family differences and uniting in one grand effort to achieve their independence. Some chiefs joined Bruce, some opposed him, others stood aloof. Bruce himself imported the methods of Border warfare into Ireland, and marched about burning and plundering, leaving famine and pestilence in his train. At first he carried all before him; ultimately he was brought to action by superior forces and killed, but not before his many successes had grievously weakened the prestige and demonstrated the vincibility of the dreaded Anglo-Norman lords.

Though the immediate danger to English supremacy was thus removed, it was henceforth, for the next two centuries, to be steadily on the wane. The fact was that the expansionist policy started by Edward III and continued throughout the Hundred Years' War put a strain upon England's resources that they were wholly inadequate to bear, and it was, if we may use the expression, a matter almost of historical certainty that while she was bleeding herself to death in France, Ireland would slip from her grasp. It is useless to describe this process in detail. The Irish clans gradually recovered their strength, and though they were never able to bring their military equipment and methods of fighting up to English standards—they were as hopelessly butchered at Stoke at the end of the fifteenth century as they had been before Dublin in the twelfth—they considerably increased their military efficiency by the employment of professional soldiers. What was even more serious, the great Anglo-Norman families, with characteristic Norman adaptability, began to intermarry and mingle with the Irish nobility, until, from being a foreign garrison they became the leaders of the Irish people, more Irish, it has been said, than the Irish themselves. The family

that had produced the bitterest of Ireland's detractors in Giraldus Cambrensis was to give birth, as the Fitzgeralds, to some of her noblest patriots and martyrs.

As the Crown and its representatives found their authority slipping away, their hatred of all things Irish, and still more, Anglo-Irish, increased with their fear. All manner of abuse, in the true spirit of Giraldus, was heaped upon the unfortunate Irish, who were described as brute beasts, given over to filthy customs, and the Hibernicised Englishman was, if anything, more hated than the Irishman. By the middle of the fourteenth century England had tacitly abandoned her attempt to goven effectively the whole of Ireland, and endeavoured to form a reservation or pale of English colonists, who should be prevented from mingling in any way with the wild tribes without. An Englishman who married an Irishwoman was, in the reign of Edward III, rendered liable to be hanged, drawn and quartered. The crowning act of this policy was the statute of Kilkenny, passed under the auspices of Edward III's son, Lionel. This Act, after attributing all the disorder of the country to the influence exercised by the Irish over the English, not only forbade intermarriage, but the very use of the Irish language or the entertainment of Irish minstrels, a fine unconscious tribute to the influence of Irish song. Brehon Law was banned, and all benefices and religious houses closed to Irishmen.

Such legislation was no more effective than Mrs. Partington's broom in stemming the tide of resurgent Irishry. Gradually the English Pale shrank, till by the middle of the fifteenth century it consisted of a little patch of country round Dublin. In 1460 an Irish or Anglo-Irish Parliament, summoned by Richard Duke of York, who was ready cheerfully to sacrifice to his dynastic ambitions the last vestiges of English authority in Ireland, actually went so far as to assert its own complete independence of the laws of England and to demand a separate coinage. Ireland was now to all intents and purposes a free country, but she was no nearer unity than she had been in the days of Henry II. It was certain that as soon as the English monarchy recovered its strength, advantage would be taken of this chronic disunion to start the whole dreary business of conquest over again.

Despite every disadvantage, despite anarchy deliberately fomented by authority, the Celtic civilization not only revived as the English power weakened, but entered upon a period of rich fruition, materially and spiritually. Trade and industry both flourished,

Irish rugs and mantles were particularly sought after and, in 1399, Sluys was made the staple for the sale of Irish cloaks. English and Irish combined in keeping alive the spirit of Celtic culture. To quote the words of Mrs. J. R. Green: "Not one of the hereditary houses of historians, lawyers, poets, physicians, seems to have failed. . . . In astronomy Irishmen were still first in Europe. In medicine they had all the science of their age. Nearly all our knowledge of Irish literature comes from copies of older works made by industrious scribes of this period. From time to time Assemblies of all the learned men were called together by patriotic chiefs. . . . From sea to sea scholars and artists gathered to show their skill to the men of Ireland; and in these glorious assemblies the people learned anew the wealth of their civilization, and celebrated with fresh ardour the unity of the Irish nation." [1]

Unfortunately for Ireland, her sons appeared to be incapable of organizing themselves to maintain that unity, so much to be desired. The dreary tale of tribal feuds went on, and it was only a question of time until England should gather strength for a new and more dreadful onslaught on Irish liberty and Irish civilization.

4

The Culture of Chivalry

The mission of that great mind-training society, the Church, of transforming raw barbarians into civilized Christians, achieved its greatest measure of success during the thirteenth century. Never had the ideal of a united Christendom seemed nearer to realization than in its opening years; never did the flame of holiness burn brighter than among the first Franciscan and Dominican friars; never had the spiritual power achieved a more striking victory than in breaking the imperial House of Hohenstaufen. And yet in this, as in most wars, the victor had injured himself almost as much as his antagonist. In that skin game of Pontiff versus Caesar, the Church had not only overstrained her resources, but had impaired beyond recovery the spiritual prestige that was her most valuable asset. She was no longer alone as a civilizing agency; the revulsion from the things of the next to the things of this world had unmistakably set in before the close of the century, and the dream of a united Christendom was fading into the common day of national self-sufficiency.

[1] *Irish Nationality*, pp. 115–16.

Even before the dawning of the thirteenth century, signs might have been observed of an approaching change. Influences from the rival civilization of Islam, against which the armies of Western Christendom spent themselves with such heroic futility, could not be prevented from making themselves felt. The South of France, largely no doubt owing to its neighbourhood with Moorish Spain, was peculiarly susceptible. It was here that a revolt against the dogma and wealth of the Church kindled and spread into Northern Italy, a revolt that it required all the ardour of the preaching friars, all the rigours of the Inquisition, all the brute force of a crusading baronage, to stamp into submission. It was here that the courtly minstrelsy, composed by troubadours, chiefly flourished, and in this, too, we can trace the Moorish and Eastern influence.

Such strains as those of the troubadours were not for the poor and simple. It would have been of no use discoursing to serfs or craftsmen of the refinements of courtly love. A new, aristocratic culture was, in fact, coming into being, of a tendency essentially pagan. The feudal nobility throughout Western Christendom was in fact, though formally as orthodox as ever, beginning to break away from the leading strings of Mother Church and transform itself into an hereditary and highly exclusive caste, with its own standards of honour and courtesy comprehended in the word chivalry. The idea was born long before the thirteenth century: the Song of Roland, which was chanted at Hastings, is full of it, and even Rufus was, according to his lights, a pattern of chivalry. But courtesy and refinement were not conspicuous among the qualities of Rufus, though his ne'er-do-well brother, Robert, displayed the spirit of a great gentleman when he missed his chance of seizing Winchester on account of his sister-in-law's approaching confinement—" he would be a villain who should besiege a lady in such a case ".

Henry II's French empire, extending South into Aquitaine, brought England into contact with troubadour influences, and Richard I, a Poitevin by birth and a Southerner by temperament, had courtly and chivalrous traits that will invest his memory for ever with a halo of romance. But Richard, like that later and worthier monarch, Saint Louis of France, was a soldier of the Church, and so long as the crusades lasted, the pagan element of chivalry was baulked of its full development by the countervailing force of Christian idealism.

With the shattering of the Church's prestige in the struggle with the Hohenstaufen, the crusading spirit waxed faint and cold, and

though the troubadours had been slaughtered and dispersed in the brutual heresy hunt that, during the third decade of the 13th century, had enabled the French King to ruin the gracious Provençal culture and grab the rich County of Toulouse, it was the troubadour spirit, and not that of the Church, that inspired aristocratic culture after the death of Saint Louis. Already the wonderful young Emperor, Frederick II, had displayed to a scandalized Europe the spectacle of a court in which Islamic and Christian influences were blended impartially, in which science and experiment were honoured with entire freedom from ecclesiastical restrictions.

Edward I stood for the finest chivalric ideals of this time of transition. He had been the destined companion of Saint Louis on the last of the crusades, and on arriving at Tunis to find the Christian hero dead, he determined to go on to Palestine, at all hazards, to fulfil his vow. On returning from this forlorn hope, he distinguished himself by his victory, in tournament, over the Count of Chalons. It is during his reign that a new spirit begins to come over English art and life, which shows plainly how the old religious fervour is beginning to give place to aristocratic pomp and circumstance. The new phase of English art has been happily named the Decorated, from the architectural style that was gradually evolved out of the earnest and religiously inspired Gothic that is known as Early English.

Hitherto the most obvious triumphs of Gothic art had been the great French Cathedrals. But the Gothic aspiration did not long survive the crusades, and while French craftsmanship retained its supremacy in the plastic arts until the catastrophe of the Hundred Years' War, a strange paralysis came over French architecture during the closing years of the century. Even the completion of yet unfinished buildings appeared to be a task beyond the capacity of an age which had forgotten the secret of Chartres and Rheims. With England it was different. To the beauty of holiness, as displayed in Salisbury and the West front of Wells, succeeds the ordered exuberance and sheer joy of life that inform such masterpieces of decorated art as Exeter Cathedral and the Angel Choir at Lincoln.

This is an altogether more worldly phase of art than that which preceded it, but it is even richer in colour and ornament. And though it rejoices in the adornment of churches, many of its most characteristic triumphs are in the castles and palaces of the great. Even the pious Henry III, the crowned connoisseur, had encouraged secular art, especially in his palace at Westminster, from which his

successors were to be crowded out by Parliament. The King's great or painted Chamber, unhappily destroyed by fire early in the nineteenth century, must have displayed the power of the medieval colourist as no surviving English relic of that age possibly can. The artist, who was employed for many years on this and similar tasks by his royal patron, was like the finisher of Canterbury choir, one William, an Englishman,[1] a monk of Westminster. But the pious Henry, though he might employ monkish artists, by no means restricted them to monkish subjects. His palace walls were adorned with the exploits of Alexander the Great, with the labours of the months and—most significantly of all—with the deeds of the national hero, Richard I. Henry, we may imagine, like other people who get constantly bullied in real life, must have derived much pleasure from identifying himself in imagination with these swashing champions.

Edward I was no connoisseur, like his father, but he was no despiser of the arts. He was not the man to lavish more treasure than necessary on the service of the Church, and in fact he generally seems to have thought it more blessed for her to give than to receive. His chief buildings consist of that magnificent chain of castles by which he secured his newly conquered Welsh province. These castles, fashioned on the Byzantine plan of a ring, or concentric rings, of bastion towers connected by walls, not only represented the latest word in fortification, but also, in a very real sense, embodied the chivalric ideal of life which was coming more and more to dominate an upper class already fast sliding into paganism. We have only to look at the royal castle of Conway, with its magnificent, if awkwardly sited, Great Hall, and the exquisite little private oratory in the Queen's apartments, to recognize the gayer, more frivolous and luxurious spirit that was abroad. This age sees a corresponding development of the manor house from a gaunt fortress to a luxurious dwelling, in which life could not only be preserved from attack, but refined and ennobled with all the lavishness of decorated art. It is now that the garden ceases to be a mere appanage of the kitchen, and becomes an enclosure, walled off from the world, in which a few privileged souls can realize their notion of an earthly paradise.

The brightest and tenderest aspect of this spirit is displayed in the Eleanor crosses which the heartbroken monarch planted at every

[1] See introduction to *Catalogue of Exhibition of British Primitive Paintings*, 1923, by W. G. Constable.

nightly halting place of his Queen's body on its journey to Westminster. It is difficult to believe that the statues that adorn these crosses can be separated by so short a period of time from those of the queens and holy women who stand on the West front of Wells. We can hardly imagine the most thoughtless tourist speaking of one of these Wells figures as a good-looking, still less as a pretty woman. Their clothes fall in severe lines, designed to focus the attention on each figure's spiritual significance. There is a sublime impersonality about them; their namés, differently guessed at in different catalogues, are irrelevant. But Eleanor, as she appears on her crosses or in her recumbent bronze in the Abbey by an English goldsmith, named Torrell, is a great and individual lady, exquisitely clad, her lovely hair falling over her shoulders, and her fascination not dead. *Chère reine*! She differs from the Wells figures as a love poem differs from a hymn.

For now love itself was being sublimated into a form of worship that, in theory, at any rate, retained nothing of the animal. This was partly due to the troubadours, to whom love was one of the fine arts, with its proper laws and technique. Something must be allowed for Celtic influence, as evinced in the Tristram and other romantic legends, but most of all is the "maiden passion for a maid" born of the Madonna cult, in which a simple virgin is elevated to the queenship of Heaven. No doubt this idealism of the beloved was often but the thinnest veneer over a reality of animal and mercenary desires, but even so it was enough to effect a humanizing change at least in upper class society by the new dignity with which it invested womanhood. For this we have, as indeed we might expect, the evidence of female costume. Instead of the tunic hanging loose from the shoulders or secured at the hips by a belt, my lady's clothes are, in the fourteenth century, tailored coquettishly to display every seductive curve of figure. Fashion is a product of the Renaissance, and constitutes the ever-changing medium through which feminine charm finds scope for expression.

We can hardly wonder that the Arthur legend, "the matter of Britain," now as famous throughout Christian Europe as the Homeric poems in classic Greece, takes on an ever increasing importance at the court of Arthur's presumed successors. It was only to be expected that Edward I should have presided over a stately ceremony at Glastonbury when the remains of Arthur and his Queen were transferred to a new and more splendid resting place, Edward and Eleanor acting as bearers. Those many-towered castles, so brave

without and so gay within, seemed to reproduce the very atmosphere of that imagined court at Camelot, and certainly were far more like it than anything known to the real victor of Mons Badonicus. In the reign of the third Edward this romantic idea was pushed to its extreme conclusion, and that by no means unworldly monarch posed as a second Arthur and presided over a Round Table of his own at Winchester.

As was the King, so were the noblemen, and there was growing up a veritable romance of aristocracy that was not without practical consequences. The rough and ready feudalism of the Norman barons by no means sufficed for their descendants. A science of heraldry was beginning to be cultivated; every noble house blazoned its own chosen device; the red chevrons of Clare and the white crosses of Berkeley were as well known in battle and tournament as are the dark and light blue at Lord's and Putney. Even the House of God was no longer His monopoly. The tombs and private chapels of the great claimed more and more space, obscuring the main design of the building, and impeding its ostensible purpose of worship. Stained glass windows no longer served exclusively as the Bibles and hagiologies of the illiterate; escutcheons were blazoned on them with more splendid effect than on the stone of the tombs, and sometimes, as in the choir at Tewkesbury, instead of saints and martyrs appear armed warriors, distinguished scions of particular families.

What is remarkable, however, about English history, is not the growth of aristocratic pretensions, which was a European phenomenon, but the extent to which, in England, it was held in check, despite the fact that at the beginning of the fourteenth century the great landowners, monastic as well as noble, were reaping immense profits from the raw wool which, before a native cloth manufacture had time to establish itself against Flemish competition, formed an overwhelming proportion of our export trade. But the strong Kings after the Conquest, and the governmental machine they built up, secured firstly that even the greatest feudatories were not able to maintain an individual independence of authority, but at best to combine as members of a party, and secondly that there should be no noble caste, hedged about with privileges, and passing on its blue blood to all lawful issue. A nobleman had few privileges, and at best could transmit his nobility to nobody but his eldest son. For a long time it was doubtful whether he had the right to do even that; as late as the reign of Charles I it was a moot point amongst lawyers whether the summons of a baron to Parliament conferred this right

upon him and his heirs for all succeeding Parliaments. The younger sons, instead of taking their stand on the privileges of their ancestors, freely combined with the burgesses and lesser gentry to form the Lower House of Parliament.

The fact is that England's insular position and the levelling effect of the Norman Conquest saved her from the excesses of Continental feudalism and allowed her to develop upon national as opposed to class lines. Of monarchs such as Edward I and his grandson it is a nice point whether they imposed their will on the nation or whether they were not, in the last resort, but the mouthpieces and right arms of public opinion. England, merrie England as she was now to be called, had passed through the dark night of foreign conquest, she had got a monarch of her own who was capable of making short work of her vassalage to the Pope, she was beginning to enjoy the sweets of victory and the more substantial profits of commerce, she was becoming proudly and joyously self-conscious. A note of robust confidence is that of the new age, an aspiration less after Heaven than the joys of this world—in the song of the time it seems to be one perpetual May.

Decorated art could never have blossomed out as it did if it had been entirely the expression of class consciousness. The reason for nothing of the sort having developed across the Channel is, we cannot help feeling, because the proud and exclusive French nobility was able to choke the expression of national sentiment. It took a century of English aggression and conquest to recall the "sweet France" of Roland to a sense of her nationality—and not until the noble caste was swept out of the country at the Revolution was that lesson fully learnt. But the English riot of tracery, of sculpture, of tabernacle work, which is as evident in the humblest parish churches as in the proudest cathedrals, is merely giving expression to the same phase of public sentiment that is beginning to inspire the growth of native literature.

5

Expansion in France

The death of Edward I in harness, between Carlisle gates and the Border, ushers in twenty years of reaction and discomfiture. Even if the new King had been the man his father was, he would have found it hard to govern a nation whose resources had been cruelly overstrained, and to go on with the Sisyphean task of governing

Scotland against its will. With such a hopeless scatterbrain as Edward II, the only wonder is that the end was deferred so long. But the magnates who opposed him were, with the possible exception of the trimmer Earl of Pembroke, hardly more competent and much less amiable.

The great contest of the reign was between the King and the magnates for the control of the administrative machine. It was the same situation that had led to civil war in the reign of Henry III. Parliament, in the most comprehensive sense, hardly counted in the struggle, for the Commons had not yet learnt to act for themselves. This time there was no Earl Simon to lay the foundations of a national policy, nor Lord Edward to build on them. The great lords were too selfish to unite for long on a policy of any kind, and the King too inept to profit by the opportunities that the turn of events more than once gave him of retrieving the situation. In the course of these ignoble squabbles England was swept out of Scotland, much to her own benefit, and had her Northern counties harried with impunity.

But so strongly fashioned was the bureaucracy that it survived every effort to weaken or capture it, and when Edward II was at last turned off the throne by his fiendish French wife and her paramour and they in turn were forced to yield their power to a third Edward, the young King found himself in control of an administration as efficient as that of his grandfather, and England, which had had leisure, during twenty inglorious years, to recuperate her energies, was ready to start afresh on the career of expansion and conquest that had been suspended at the warrior King's death.

The new Edward was thoroughly representative of the worldly spirit that was beginning to dominate Western Europe during this, the century of Petrarch and Boccaccio. He is a true Renaissance type. There is a sternness and simplicity about Edward I and his contemporaries that we miss during the reign of his grandson. If we wish to know precisely in what that change consisted, we can hardly do better than study their two visionary heads, as drawn by Blake. Whether by sheer coincidence or inspiration, the artist seer has admirably hit off the difference not only between two men but two periods. Edward I is narrow and cruel, but a man obviously of iron will and a certain rough-hewn grandeur. The visionary Edward III is sensual and full-lipped, clever enough, but cast in a mould of pettiness, a man, one would say, of low and not always consistent aims. There is a veneer of romance about Edward III's

military adventures, but their motives and methods are more those of the huckster than of the hero. Nobody, in fact, ever had a sharper eye for the main chance than the victor of Cressy, and even of that pattern of chivalry, the Black Prince, his son, the clearest vision we have is of a sick conqueror, borne on a litter through the streets of blazing Limoges, watching unmoved the hacking to death of men, women and children, and then kindly sparing the lives of three gentlemen who, having no prospect of quarter, were defending them with convincing vigour. If we want to find the real hero of that time, we must look not to the self-styled Arthur and his "Table" of aristocratic mummers, but to the green-clad figure of Robin Hood, the representative of the great unrecorded host of free Englishmen.

To give him his due, Edward III was one of the best tacticians as well as one of the subtlest statemen of that age. He started his reign with one somewhat dangerous asset of which he knew how to make the most. He had at his command a weapon and a system of defensive tactics that would enable an English army to repulse, at almost any odds, the attack of any force that was likely to be brought against it for a century. The long bow, drawn to the ear, was, in its origin, more a Welsh than an English weapon, and its deadly efficacy depended less on the fashioning of the bow than the training of the bowman, which was a life's work. At any range under a furlong the goose-shaft had the deadliness of a bullet; it would pierce armour and was capable of much more rapid fire than the old-fashioned cross-bow.

Again, while the French army was still in the feudal stage, the strength of the central government had allowed our Kings, since the days of Henry II, to lay the foundations of a national army, and to see to it that every free man was possessed of weapons appropriate to his rank. The army that fought at Cressy was no more or less fortuitous concourse of lords with their retainers, but a trained and disciplined force, each with his fixed rate of pay, from the Black Prince to the humblest man at arms.

The English system of tactics was the result of long and painful experience. Falkirk and Bannockburn had shown that the charge of feudal cavalry could be broken by infantry in position. Falkirk had shown that the steadiest infantry could be shot down by archers, and Bannockburn how unsupported archers could be ridden down, from a flank, by cavalry. A perfect example of the combination of archers and infantry was afforded in 1322 at Boroughbridge, when the Earl of Lancaster, the most powerful of Edward II's rebellious

magnates, attacked a small Royalist force under Sir Andrew Harclay, and was utterly overthrown.

Edward III soon had a chance of applying the lesson on a grander scale. Three years after Bruce's death the old succession feud of Bruce and Balliol broke out again, and this time the Balliol faction, which had secured the irregular aid of a small English force, got the best of it, the whole Scottish host being overthrown by a comparative handful of English archers and men-at-arms. Edward was quick to intervene in the dispute; his treaty obligations to the young King David Bruce, his prospective son-in-law, went by the board, and he recognized Balliol as King on almost the same humiliating conditions as his grandfather had recognized an earlier Balliol. This was too much for the Scots, who were not long in getting rid of their puppet King. This brought Edward openly into the field on the side of his vassal, and he had no difficulty in putting his new tactics into practice and shooting to pieces the columns of Scottish spearmen who were rash enough to attack him in his position on Halidon Hill, a victory that laid Scotland once again at the feet of an English King. This time Edward avoided the mistake of his grandfather of trying to impose his sway on the whole of an unwilling Scotland, and contented himself with what, even according to modern theories of race, might have seemed a subtle and scientific move. He annexed the East Coast strip up to Edinburgh, the old Anglian district that had been part of the Northumbrian Kingdom. Unfortunately the spiritual bond of nationality was stronger than the blood bond of race, and Edward's hold on his new possessions gradually relaxed. Besides, Scotland would never tolerate a creature of England on her throne, and before many years King David was back from France in undisputed sway of his father's kingdom.

The centre of interest now shifts to France, where the inevitable conflict could not much longer be delayed. There were two permanent sources of quarrel. One consisted in the English possession of Aquitaine, in the natural desire of the French monarchy to round off its dominions in the South-West, and in the irritating homage that every French King expected from his English neighbour for these possessions. The other and even more serious difference consisted in the rivalry for the possession of the Flemish wool market. The King of France here secured a notable advantage in making the feudal Count of Flanders as much his puppet as Balliol was that of Edward. French influence in Flanders rendered even more hopeless the attempt of the English King to hold Scotland, since it enabled

France once again to close the Flemish market to exporters from Edward's dominions.

Flanders was no more enamoured of a puppet Count than Scotland of a puppet King, and France could not take England's place as the feeder of Flemish looms. A patriotic revolution broke out in the cities, and at the suggestion of its leader, Van Artevelde, Edward revived a claim, defensible from a legal standpoint, to be the rightful King of France. This at once got rid of any question of homage or awkwardness about treason to an overlord. Edward was not sufficiently blind to reality to imagine that even the not too loyal French nobility, which had unanimously rejected his claim when it had been first advanced, would tolerate the King of England on the throne of Saint Louis.

Edward's opening of the war, which, after two years of irregular hostilities, formally commenced in 1339, was not auspicious. He revived John's plan of a German alliance, and got himself appointed Vicar General of the Imperial forces. But his attempts to invade France at the head of an Anglo-German-Flemish army were an utter and costly failure. Edward's resources were not equal to financing the venture, and he was in constant trouble with his allies, who would not fight unless he paid them, and his Parliament, that grudged him the necessary supplies. The French King wisely allowed Edward to fritter his strength against fortresses and gave him no opportunity of fighting a pitched battle. In this opening phase of the war, England's solitary gleam of success was the naval victory off Sluys, the ever-changing port of Bruges, which, as Damme, had given its name to the first of our naval victories, and which, as Zeebrugge, was to be associated with an achievement more glorious than any victory. The command of the sea was, however, of little avail in view of Edward's incapability of profiting by it on land.

The war was therefore a stalemate, and died down from mutual exhaustion, until in 1346 it broke out again as fiercely as ever. This time Edward determined to force the hand of his Fabian opponent—for it is only fair to give so skilful a soldier the credit of knowing what he was about when, instead of resuming his futile operations from the Flanders base, he countered a French thrust at Gascony by an advance on Paris up the Seine valley. It was a gamble on exterior lines, in which failure spelt annihilation, as the King of France, with an army immensely superior in numbers, was advancing to cut off the English retreat, and only the lucky chance of Edward's finding a ford over the Somme saved him from being caught like a

rat in a trap. Find it he did, however, and then, turning to bay in a chosen position on the edge of the forest of Cressy, had his long-awaited opportunity of practising the English system of dismounted tactics against the frontal attack of feudal cavalry. The result must have been a foregone conclusion to anyone who had served in the Scottish wars. A force of Genoese crossbowmen were easily put out of action by the superior rapidity of our long-bow archery, and the successive detachments of mailed cavalry, who attacked without any sort of co-ordination or discipline, were shot down by a converging fire of arrows as they dashed into the crescent of the English line. Only once did they succeed in closing, to be driven back by a prompt counter attack of Edward's reserve. The affair was a massacre and, except where there was a chance of extorting ransom, a massacre without quarter.

This was not the only success of this eventful year, for David of Scotland, who invaded England in the absence of her King, was routed by a force hastily levied in the North, and brought a prisoner to the Tower. These victories brought Edward no whit nearer to establishing what he called his "right" to the French crown. Nor, realist as he was beneath his romantic exterior, is it probable that he took this right very seriously except for bargaining purposes. Instead of resuming his threat to Paris, he took advantage of Cressy to march off to the coast and sit down before the fortified port of Calais, which he eventually took and anglicised, thus securing for himself the command of the Channel at its narrowest point, as well as an ideal port of entry for English exports to the Continent and an open gate for any future invasion of France.

Even so, the war dragged on its weary and wasteful course, since it was equally impossible for Edward to force a decision or conclude a satisfactory peace. An English army might be invincible in the field, but the long bow, though it could pierce a door four inches thick, was powerless against stone walls, and it was the French policy to retire behind their fortifications and allow the English to wear themselves out in fruitless marches. Even the fearful visitation of the Black Death or bubonic plague, which swept off anything up to half the population of Europe, could not discourage the survivors from continuing to plague each other with undiminished vigour. It was a mere question of how long the resources of England would stand the strain.

Ten years after Cressy, a small army, largely Gascon in composition, which the Black Prince had led on a looting expedition

out of Aquitaine, was brought to battle near Poictiers by a vastly more numerous French army. The new King, John of France, with more chivalry than commonsense, launched a blundering attack on the Anglo-Gascon position. The result was an even more sensational victory than Cressy, and the King of France went to join his ally of Scotland in captivity. Four years later sheer weariness compelled the conclusion of a peace, or breathing space, that left England in possession of an enormous province of South-Western France, as well as Calais and the surrounding country.

Such an unnatural arrangement could obviously be no more than temporary. The inevitable end was hastened by the wanton stupidity of the Black Prince who, instead of peacefully consolidating his swollen province of Aquitaine, must needs waste his army and treasure interfering in a dynastic quarrel for the throne of Castile. On his return, with a decimated army and shattered constitution, he sought to relieve his embarrassments by the imposition of a hearth tax. This was more than his French subjects were prepared to stand, and the French monarchy naturally took advantage of the situation to revive its claims to the suzerainty of Aquitaine, and, in 1369, to renew the war.

By this time John of France was dead, and his successor, Charles V, was no romantic knight but one of those cool-headed Latin realists of the type of Philip Augustus. He made no mistakes. The English were never allowed to try conclusions in a pitched battle, and their armies marched about the country burning and looting and exhausting themselves, while their recent conquests slipped from their grasp and returned to their natural allegiance. Even on the sea we were no longer dominant, for the Black Prince's vagaries in Castile had had the effect of bringing in that Kingdom on the side of France, and her fleet succeeded in destroying an English force destined for the reinforcement of our Southern army, and in impeding our communications with Aquitaine. Not even our shores and Channel ports were now safe from enemy raids.

By the end of Edward's reign, without the loss of any considerable land battle, the English possessions in France were reduced to Calais in the North and a few coast towns in Gascony. All the waste of blood and treasure, all the glories of Cressy and Poictiers, had left England with even less territory than before, while the exercise of English sovereignty on French soil still poisoned the relations between the two countries, and a fresh irritant had been set up by the claim of the English Royal House to the French crown. Even in Flanders

our policy broke down when, in 1382, the Flemish democracy was decisively overthrown, at Roosbeke, by the pro-French nobles.

The price paid by both countries for this glorious means of failing to settle their differences was incalculable, both materially and spiritually. France had suffered the worse, because her territory had been the seat of war. The spirit that had inspired her Gothic cathedrals and made her the artistic and intellectual leader of the West, was now cold indeed, and the pressure from England was hardly relaxed than she began to slide down into a chaos of faction and civil war. In England the chivalrous monarch of the Round Table and the Garter was dying in a disreputable and premature old age; his subjects were divided by political and religious hatreds, with brutal reaction growing on the one hand and agrarian unrest on the other. The stage was set for the miserable reign and end of Richard II.

6

Merrie England

The work begun by Geoffrey of Monmouth of creating a pride in the past of England, Saxon and British, was being steadily carried on. The separation of England from Normandy was appropriately marked by the appearance of an Arthurian chronicle in the English tongue, written by one who, like Geoffrey of Monmouth, was a native of the Welsh marshes. "There was a priest in the land who was called Layamon . . . he dwelt at Ernley, a noble church on the Severn's bank, good there it seemed to him . . . it came to him in mind, and in his chief thought, that he would tell the noble deeds of the English." This worthy priest, in fact, made it his care that while the "matter of Britain" was spreading all over Europe, the English should have a version of their own in which the patriotic motive was not overborne by chivalrous romance. There is no doubt about Layamon's love of England. There is burning indignation when he recounts how Gawain was slain and deprived of his life-blood by a Saxon Earl—sorry be his soul!—and his book ends with that most beautiful of all the Arthurian traditions, that there was a sage called Merlin, and he said with words—his sayings were sooth—that an Arthur should yet come to help the English.

Nor is Arthur the only worthy of England on whom tradition fastens. The proverbs of Alfred are resurrected, and perhaps invented in the process; the very feudal romances, by which the

long, bookless evenings of the baronial castle were rendered tolerable, become tinged with the pride of nationality. The names of Athelstan and Edgar occur in these romances, while the time of good King Edward the Confessor is looked upon as a veritable golden age. Such Saxon heroes are revived as Bevis of Southampton, the knight who marries the beautiful Paynim, and Guy of Warwick, who vanquishes the champion of the Danish invaders in single combat, and fills the same place in English as the youthful David in Hebrew and the Horatii in Roman legend.

It was to be expected that the spirit which fired England in the reign of Edward I, and impelled it to manifest its prowess at the expense of surrounding peoples, should find expression in epic form. Sure enough, the need is supplied by a rhyme which enables us to understand, in all its rude strength and brutality, the temperament of the average Englishman who broke the pikemen at Falkirk and amused himself by watching Wallace, in a paper crown, being dragged on a hurdle to Smithfield. The hero is, ironically enough, Richard Coeur de Lion, the Poitevin who, more than any other of our sovereigns, set at naught his English subjects. But a century had passed and England meant to have her own Richard as she had her own Arthur. He may truly be said to be fashioned after the heart of his people, such a King as they would have liked an English King to be, such a King as they liked to imagine their own Edward Longshanks. " Lord, King of Glory, what favours didst Thou bestow on King Richard! How edifying is it to read the history of his conquests! "

The English hero is certainly a mighty warrior, both in person and as a commander of armies; he has a militant devotion to what he calls Christianity; he is, moreover, a blood-thirsty ruffian of the most unredeemed stamp. The real Richard had not been too tender or clean-handed an opponent, but he had had noble impulses and could evince a generous respect even for Saladin. No trace of this redeeming chivalry is allowed to appear in the legend; he not only revels in the ruthlessness but the cannibalism of himself and his Englishmen; his last message to Saladin is a polite hope that the devil may hang him with a cord. When he is sick of an ague, he is cured by having served up to him, as pork, the flesh of a fat young Saracen prisoner, and at the appearance on the table of the grinning head, roars with laughter at the joke, and declares that he and his followers will in future eat " all as many as we can get ".

He is naturally highly favoured of Heaven, and when he is in

momentary doubt as to what to do with sixty thousand prisoners, he is granted a vision of the holy angels, calling out, "Lords, kill! kill! Spare them not but behead them," whereupon King Richard, having first duly thanked "God and Holy Cross", commences so jolly a massacre that the author cannot refrain from giving vent to his high spirits in one of those songs of May which were coming to be so characteristic a feature of English poetry.

So strange were the elements that went to the making of Merrie England! There is, however, nothing to be gained by sentimentalizing our ancestors. We must take them for what they were, and remember that their England had learnt her unity in the roughest of schools. Whatever judgment we may be pleased to pass on them now, it is certain that the England of Edward I was robustly self-confident and proud of itself. As Robert of Gloucester sings:

> "England is a right merry land, of all on earth it is best,
> Y-set in the end of the world, as here, all in the West,
> The sea goeth it all about, it stands right as an isle."

or as, a little later, Trevisa puts it: "England full of play! Free men well worthy to play! Free men, free tongues, heart free."

The patriotism thus engendered was not of the kind that tolerates or respects other peoples. On the contrary, it took the form of an intensely arrogant collective egotism. How the English regarded their Irish neighbours we have already seen, and they appear to have regarded the Scots with a venomous hatred that we find cropping up again and again, until the days of Butcher Cumberland and Lord Bute. A monkish chronicler cannot even describe the first crusading enthusiasm without mentioning how the Scot forsook his fellowship with vermin, an insinuation that we have met with in the comic press of our own day. The event of Bannockburn did not increase the love of Englishman for Scot, and the patriotic, not to say Jingo muse of Laurence Minot, is decidedly more bitter against the Scots, who are "full of guile", than against the French.

As for these latter, we have in *Richard Coeur de Lion* what was to be the stock form that abuse of Frenchmen was to take until the French became our allies and above criticism. The French, it seems, are fond enough of boasting over their cups at a tavern, but when it comes to "where men strokes deal", they begin to turn their heels and draw in their horns. As the struggle between England and France develops, so does the wordy warfare of abuse. One Latin poem contrasts the countrymen of good King Arthur with the French, who are treated with a wealth of adjectives worthy of the yellow

press at its yellowest. There is, moreover, an interchange of Billingsgate between an imaginary Englishman and Frenchman that must have been not unlike the real thing, the point of the Frenchman being that the English are as stupid as their cattle, and the English retaliating with a catalogue of vices best left to the imagination.

Finally we have Laurence Minot, who wrote songs for the jolly archers of Cressy and Poictiers to sing round their camp fires. Had Laurence lived to-day he would have made a fortune by writing patriotic songs for music halls. There is a fine swing and gusto about the song of the Scottish King David at Neville's Cross :

"The North End of England teached him to dance,"

or this, addressed to the French after Cressy :—

"With speech ne might thou never spare
To speak of Englishmen despite,
Now have they made thy dwelling bare,
And of thy chattels art thou quite (despoiled).

"English men shall yet this year
Knock thy head before thou pass,
And make thee shaven like a frere—
And yet is England as it was."

We notice that Minot has already acquired the habit of talking as if England were a person, as when David of Scotland says that of all England he has no dread, or when one of the songs ends with the prayer :—

"Now Jesus save all England,
And bless it with His holy hand."

This is a notable step forward in the formation of a national self-consciousness.

We must not allow ourselves to be tempted into the partizanship of asserting that any war is an evil absolutely unmitigated. The historian, however scientific he may aspire to be, cannot ignore the pageantry and cicumstance of arms, because these sway powerfully the minds of men, and it is the minds of men that make history. Cressy and Poictiers may be episodes of no great military importance in an unrighteous adventure that was not even justified by success, but these considerations probably never crossed the minds of those engaged in them, and popular feeling finds the truest expression in such strains as those of Minot. What an impression was produced by these wonderful victories against odds, by the national heroes, the Black Prince and his father, and above all by our English archers, may be judged by the persistency with which their legend has endured.

So late as 1914 when, in the stress and weariness of our fighting retreat from Mons, men began to see visions, some would have it that the lines of archers appeared, as at Cressy, drawing to the ear their long bows against the advancing masses of field grey.

In how true a sense these archers were a democratic force can be seen by the testimony of Sir John Fortescue, writing during the reign of Edward IV. He is meeting the argument of some typical reactionary who has urged that the Commons of England should be kept poor as a safeguard against rebellion. This, in fact, is just what happens in France, where the Commons are impoverished, while the King dares not ask for a subsidy of his nobles, " for dread that if he charged them so, they would confederate with the Commons and peradventure put him down." Whereas the might of England reposes upon her archers " which be no rich men . . . wherefore the making poor of the Commons, which is the making poor of our archers, shall be the destruction of the greatest might of our realm".

In the latter half of the fourteenth century English legend is enriched by a hero who is not, like Arthur, a feudal king surrounded by his magnates, but a man of the people, an archer and an outlaw. It is in Langland's *Piers Plowman* that we first hear of songs of Robin Hood, which were evidently popular and widely diffused, so that we may conjecture that they first began to be composed about the time of Cressy and Poictiers. The motive of the jolly outlaw was one that started long before, we meet with it in Bevis of Southampton, who fairly trounces King Edgar in order to win back his estates, and still more in Fulk Fitzwarenne, who successfully defies King John, and is connected with Ranulf of Chester, who, in his turn, as a hero of popular song, is coupled in *Piers Plowman* with Robin Hood. But these, after all, were great noblemen, whereas Robin is a commoner, a yeoman, as free as his native greenwood, as also are his three Northern counterparts, Adam Bell, William of Cloudesley, and Clym of the Clough, who, on one occasion, effect a regular " hold up " of the City of Carlisle, killing the Mayor and all the royal officials, and then extracting pardon from a sovereign who is, it seems, at heart, as good a sportsman as themselves :

> " Such perilous outlaws as they were
> Walked not by East or West."

Robin Hood exhibits the English ideal of the Middle Ages at its best and sweetest, as the romance of Richard Coeur de Lion exhibits it at its worst and roughest. Robin has that simple and

manly courtesy that we have seen sometimes in representatives of his class in the English countryside of our own day, small, independent men with their own few acres of land, sportsmen to the backbone, gentle to all and servile to none—a class whose numbers are all too scanty! He is equally a Christian and a gentleman; so great is his love for "our dear Lady" that he will never molest any company "that a woman is therein". What he takes from the rich he gives to the poor. His orders are strict against attacking any peasant or yeoman, or indeed any knight that is a good fellow, but only the Bishops, Sheriffs and other rich men who grind the faces of the poor. There is, in these ballads, an appeal to that strain of jolly lawlessness which, paradoxically enough, seems to go along with the English respect for law. The root of this sentiment is the same unconquerable individualism which informs the English Common Law and which makes an Englishman value his rights above everything in the world. The immortal Punch, who hangs the hangman, has his direct prototype in Robin, who disguises himself as a hangman, in order to rescue a widow's three sons, and closes the proceedings by hanging the Sheriff of Nottingham.

"I ne'er was hangman in my life,
Nor yet intends to trade;
But curst be he," said bold Robin,
"That first a hangman was made."

Pervading all is the fresh, keen scent of spring in the greenwood; in these ballads of Robin spring seems to reign all the year round. His very birth

"It wasna in the ha', the ha',
Nor in the painted bower,
But it was in the gude greenwood,
Amang the lily flower."

Such is the spirit of this England of Robin Hood and the archers, of Chaucer and the Black Prince. It is an age that seems to have a natural affinity with youth and the spring-tide, it is, in a pre-eminent degree, merry. In song after song we hear the same happy note, as carefree and unforced as the throstle's, of the world at play, of life awakening to its own sweet realization:—

"Between March and April,
When spray beginneth to spring,
The little fowl hath her will
On her song to sing—
I live in love-longing!"

or

> " Groweth seed
> And bloweth mead
> And springeth the wood new,"

or, as the greatest singer of all has it :—

> " When that Aprilé, with his showrés sote
> The drought of March hath percéd to the rote."

7

Money Begins to Talk

While the aristocracy was evolving a culture and chivalry of its own, an even more striking progress had been made in the towns, where the beginnings of a middle class were already apparent before the opening of the fourteenth century. The towns, it may be remembered, had suffered less from the Norman conquest than the country districts, and though they were grievously hampered by the almost inevitable castle, and its attendant burdens, they had benefited not a little from King's Peace and national unity. It is exactly forty years after the Conquest that we hear of the first of the Trade Clubs, or Gilds Merchant, that by the thirteenth century were to become the most prominent feature of urban life.

The habit of forming clubs or gilds was one of the most powerful factors in the growth of Western civilization. It was the fiction by which the practical Nordic mind relieved itself of bondage to the blood tie of family and clan. By a mixture of religious sentiment and commonsense a means was discovered of forming a sort of artificial family for any required object, temporal or spiritual or, more often, both combined. The guildsmen were not associates or partners, but brethren, in the same sense as an Indian servant to-day will often describe anyone whatever of his own creed and calling as " my brother ". A gild might take the form of a university, or a friendly society, or a trades' union, or an association for honouring some saint, though practically every gild had some element of godly devotion, on the one hand, and human conviviality on the other.

The various economic discussions on the history and functions of the gild merchant are inevitably more or less misleading, because there was no " the " gild merchant at all, but a number of different solutions of the same problem according to the lights and circumstances of each town. Given the conditions and mentality of the

time something of the sort was bound to eventuate. How the towns originated is a question to which a number of different experts have given an equal number of plausible answers, and these answers are probably all of them borne out by some facts, and none of them sufficient by itself to cover all the facts. But we may take it that in these urban origins the motive of trade was only one, and often a subordinate one of several that have to be taken into account, that the town was often little more than a defensible village, and the townsman more likely to be concerned with farming his land than marketing his goods. But the gradual recovery of European civilization combined with the good peace kept by a series of masterful kings to stimulate the marketing of superfluous products, and this was most conveniently done wherever large numbers of people were congregated together. And when trade became an important part of the town's activities, the trade club would naturally assume a corresponding importance in its social organization.

The trade that these towns carried on was of a very primitive order. The principal export was that of raw wool, and the bulk even of this was shipped in foreign bottoms. The foreign merchants, with their superior resources and organization, had their English rivals at a disadvantage even in the local markets, and bade fair to secure not only the external but most of the internal trade of the country.

It is no wonder, then, that the first object of the merchant gilds was to secure at least the local market for the local man. The foreigner—and under this term were included not only aliens, but Englishmen from other towns—was to be excluded from retail trade and brought under supervision of the gild officials. This, naturally brought the townsmen into conflict with the great landowners, who were perfectly indifferent as to whom they dealt with provided they could sell their wool as dearly and buy their luxuries as cheaply as possible, and therefore encouraged free trade with the alien. This tendency was still further strengthened by the desire of the King and the local lords to derive a revenue from the alien by taking toll of him. One of the most persistent conflicts of the Middle Ages was that between the protectionist policy of the gilds and the free trade policy of the landowners and sometimes—though by no means always—of the Crown. For the King had not only his customs and estates to think of, but also his position as head of the nation and the fact that prosperous towns meant, in the long run, a fat revenue. It was only when hard pressed for money that

Edward I departed from his usual nationalist policy, and made a treaty with the foreigners by which, in return for cash down, the Crown undertook to free them from the protective privileges of the English towns. The fact was that foreigners were less expert at evading taxation than our worthy burgesses, and the temptation to war-needy Kings, such as the first and third Edwards, to tilt the balance in the foreigner's favour was almost irresistible.

The artificial families known as merchant gilds were frankly aiming at monopoly, and were therefore seldom free from controversy. Their first struggle was to secure their right to exist and their independence of the local lord. But when that was accomplished the gild was only too apt to degenerate into a ruling oligarchy. At first the merchant gilds had been quite distinct from the governing bodies of towns, because trade had been only one, and that not necessarily the most important of the town's activities, but as time went on and municipal life became more and more commercialized, the distinction between gild and municipality would tend to become obliterated.

The gilds merchant, once they had won their freedom from feudal superiors and the right to protect themselves against outside competition, now had to deal with pressure not from above, but from below. Signs were apparent of a new phase of industrial development. Englishmen were no longer content to dispose of their raw materials to be worked up by the foreigner. The craftsman was beginning to take his place by the side of the merchant. As early as the twelfth century weavers' gilds had been formed in several of the towns, and as industry developed, craft guilds, as they were called, multiplied. The comparatively well-to-do traders of the old merchant gilds were by no means minded to share their privileges with these upstart workers. Not only in England but throughout Western Europe there was a struggle of more or less intensity between the mercantile oligarchy and industrial proletariat of the towns. In England the violence of this struggle was mitigated by the power of the central government, which prevented anything in the nature either of municipal independence or civil war. One partial exception was when Bristol, during the chaotic time of Edward II's struggle with the magnates, fell into the hands of the democratic party, who displaced the old oligarchic municipality, and took the town into their own hands, throwing up a wall to cut it off from the castle and actually letting fly a few arrows at the castle garrison. This state of things lasted for some years, during which democratic

Bristol successfully bade defiance to a royal army, but eventually the rebels were brought to heel by the magnates and their leaders expelled.

The old merchant gild was rapidly becoming an anachronism; the industrial organization of the towns had become too complex to be comprehended within the bounds of one artificial family. In England the transition from the one gild to the many was effected comparatively peacefully, and if the thirteenth century may be called that of the merchant gilds, the fourteenth is that of the craft gilds. But the supersession of the old trading oligarchy was by no means equivalent to the triumph of democracy. The old struggle between merchant and craftsman, between business man and worker, merely shifted its ground. What really happened was that one merchant gild split into several, grocers, for instance, or men who dealt on a gross or big scale, mercers, merchant tailors, and so forth, as distinct from the brotherhoods of genuine craftsmen, each of whom was, in fact, employer, worker, and shop-keeper rolled into one. There was a still further distinction, gradually becoming apparent, between the full-fledged master craftsman and the journeyman, or day worker, who, having served his apprenticeship, could not afford to set up for himself or pay the often expensive fees that the gild charged for admission.

The idyllic picture that is drawn of gild life by romantic medievalists needs considerable modification in the light of facts. The artificial families no doubt fostered a spirit of loyalty and mutual help among their members; they took a pride in sound craftsmanship, and did not permit the standard to be lowered for the sake of cheapness. But they tended to become more and more exclusive, and to the world without their pale their attitude was one of calculating and pugnacious egotism. As competing monopolies, they were at constant variance among themselves, and though the law was strong enough to prevent regular hostilities, there was irregular strife in the form of clubbing and knifing. A spirit of national and even municipal patriotism was not fostered by such means, and the gilds tended in the course of time to become petty oligarchies, incapable of adapting themselves to the changing conditions of industry.

It is fortunate that Crown and Parliament between them were capable of making a national policy prevail over the sectional interests of different groups and localities. This policy may not have been wholly disinterested or always wise, but men like the first

and third Edwards were at least capable of taking a far-sighted and statesmanlike view and—where their immediate necessities were not too pressing—of minding the permanent economic interests of their country by seeking to foster native industry, especially in the working up of our raw wool by English instead of Flemish spindles and looms. But an English cloth manufacture was a plant of slow growth, and before the time of Edward III we had neither the skill nor the resources to enter into effective competition with what has sometimes been described as the medieval Lancashire. The effort of Simon de Montfort to keep our wool at home, and make Englishmen wear English clothes, was little more than a patriotic gesture. Of more effect, probably, were the efforts of our Kings—notably Henry I and Edward III—to induce Flemings to settle in England and act as our technical instructors. It was in 1347 that Edward III gave a strong stimulus to the English cloth manufacture by an export tax on raw wool. Our cloth export, nearly killed by the plague, advanced with giant strides after 1356, and though the troubles in which the reign closed had the effect of depressing it, it was fairly booming by the end of the century.[1] But while this rapidly increasing proportion of our weaving was done for us by Englishmen, most of our carrying trade was still left to Germany.

It was not only in the intellectual and spiritual spheres that signs were apparent of the coming of a new order of things strangely different from that of feudal Catholicism. Money, which had played a comparatively unimportant part in the economy of the manor and the relations of lord and vassal, was now assuming an ever increasing importance. Chivalrous Kings like Edward III were finding it more difficult to finance campaigns than to win victories, and a king's life beneath all the show of chivalry and conquest was one unending struggle to make both ends meet. These perpetual budgetary difficulties led to some undignified shifts, such as the pawning of the crown jewels and, on one occasion, to all intents and purposes, of the Queen herself, whom Edward III had to leave behind him in Flanders as security for his debts. But they also sharpened the royal or ministerial wits to some interesting financial expedients.

The kings had been accustomed to raise money by the extraordinary expedient of licensing the Jews throughout the country, to bleed the people by lending money at staggering rates of interest, and then of themselves bleeding the Jews of all that extortion or

[1] See H. L. Gray, in the *English Historical Review* of January, 1924.

cruelty could make them yield of the proceeds. It was not least of Edward I's claims to be ranked as a national monarch that he ended this scandal by banishing the unfortunate Jews, or at least the greater part of them, though not until they had become a very diminishing asset. But he was not able to banish his need for some financial help beyond that which his own administration was capable of rendering. The international financier was already coming to the fore. The great crusading order of Knights Templars were at first the leading bankers and financiers of Europe, and Edward I had been glad to borrow money off them, but during the reign of his son the order was hurled from prosperity to ruin by a strange impulse of fury in which the desire for fabulous plunder was mingled with a fear—how well grounded we know not—of the corrupting influence of the East, coupled with perhaps some vague intuition of the new power of wealth that was undermining the old civilization. Edward II's share of the loot was what enabled him to go to Bannockburn.

Both Edward I and his son had had resource to the financial assistance of Italian bankers, and it was two great Florentine Houses, the Bardi and the Peruzzi, who played a similar part in financing Edward III's earlier campaigns to that of the Rothschilds during our Napoleonic war.

But now men were arising from among the merchant oligarchs of the towns, with sufficient capital to take a hand in the highly speculative business of advancing a lump sum on the revenue, and then farming it for themselves for what they could get. In 1345 the Italian houses went down in a financial crash, and a ring of English plutocrats undertook the financing of the Cressy and Calais and subsequent campaigns. The business was anything but a clean-handed one, and the financiers, of whom the chief was one Walter de Cheriton, used their privileged position to practice every kind of fraud and extortion. The shock of the Black Death put too great a strain on their credit, and Cheriton and his accomplices found it their turn to default, after which the King, for a time, took the administration of the revenue into his own hands.

But the capitalist had come to stay. With the growth of English industry, under the fostering care of Edward III, there were ever increasing opportunities for making and investing money. It is true that the Church set her face against usury, but her prohibition did not count for very much in practice, as it was easily evaded by pious fictions, and she was not even in theory intolerant of joint stock

investment in which there was a real element of risk. A more reputable form of business than that of the Cheriton ring was that of the rich pepperers', subsequently the grocers' gild, which borrowed money at interest in order to trade with it.[1] And the exclusiveness of the feudal aristocracy was already being pierced by the rise of such families as that of the De la Poles, merchants of Hull, who from being the none too clean-handed financiers became the kinsmen of royalty, and at last so near to the Crown that a King of England was moved to destroy them for rivals.

8

Parliament and its Masters

The wars of Edward III, and the perpetual drain of money which precluded the King from the least hope of living on his own resources, furnished Parliament with the opportunity of increasing and consolidating its power. The Commons were beginning to find out the advantage of petitioning collectively instead of dissipating their strength in individual requests. Experience was teaching them how, when their monarch was desperate for money, the threat of withholding supplies would enable them to levy constitutional blackmail upon him to an almost unlimited extent. Indeed, during Edward's first ruinous campaigns in North-Eastern France, they went so far as to advance a claim to control the executive by having ministerial appointments made in Parliament, and Edward III was fain formally to concede it. However, once he had secured the cash, the chivalrous King did not hesitate to repudiate an undertaking made under such *duresse*.

Three and a half centuries had yet to elapse before the country was ripe for a ministry responsible to Parliament. But the concessions that successive Parliaments managed to extort from Edward III's perpetual need of money were striking enough. They compelled the King to renounce formally most of the unparliamentary means by which his predecessors had been wont to supplement their incomes, and to establish the general principle that His Majesty must either live of his own, or take what Parliament chose to give him, upon Parliament's terms. The Commons, now a separate House, also managed to assert, if not definitely to establish the

[1] See Miss Alice Law on "English nouveaux riches in the Fourteenth Century", in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, New Series, Vol. ix.

principle that supplies, once granted, should be allocated to definite purposes, and that, as a necessary consequence, the King should submit his accounts to an audit. And if Parliament failed to control the appointment of ministers, it was at least able to secure their removal by the method of impeachment; in other words, the Commons, acting in the collective capacity of prosecutor, could bring any minister to trial before the Lords, sitting as a tribunal.

All this represents an undeniable advance towards what we now know as constitutional government, but it is easy to exaggerate its significance. No doubt the Commons, as the tax-granting body, were able to force concessions from Royalty, but they were as yet hardly capable of exercising independently the powers that they themselves had secured. This humble and silent body of men, only vocal through their Speaker, were naturally overawed by the splendid magnates from whom the King asked not only assent but advice. And powerful as the Commons might be in theory, it was only too easy for them to be packed or dominated either by some baronial faction or by Royalty itself.

Pliable as wax in the hands of these great ones, the Commons were hard as adamant in face of the common people. Parliament was national in the sense of having avoided the division into separate estates that proved so fatal to constitutional development overseas, but even its Lower House was composed on the one hand of substantial landowners, and on the other, of nominees of those richer burgesses who were engrossing power in the municipalities. This was doubtless as much as could be expected in that aristocratic and feudalized society, but it was impossible that an assembly so constituted could be sympathetic with the claims of the workers on the soil or at the craftsman's bench.

This prejudice of Parliament was shown when it had to deal with what amounted to little short of an economic revolution. The good order maintained by the administration and our immunity from overseas invasion had put the feudal organization of society based on personal services completely out of date. The use of money was coming more and more to supersede the exchange of services, and just as the King found it more convenient to have money to pay mercenaries than knights on a forty days' contract, so landowners were beginning to discover the advantages of a rent in cash down over so many days a week of grudging service on the desmesne land. The problem might, perhaps, have solved itself, and the transition from a personal to a money bond have been effected gradually and

by dint of mutual advantage, had it not been for the frightful catastrophe of the Black Death in the middle of the century.

We need not speculate on the precise percentage of the population swept away, though it must have been appallingly high. There are no complete statistics, but many sidelights available, the annihilation, for instance, of a whole monastery — that of Croxton — with the exception of the abbot and the prior; the fact of churches like that of St. Alphege, Canterbury, having had five successive rectors in one year; or most eloquent of all, the deserted church of Dode, all that is left of what must have once been a smiling village on the side of the North Downs, but which was silently wiped out—under what circumstances of horror we can only imagine—and never peopled again. To get a fair idea of the state of things in one typical district, we may take the lists of incumbents of the 14 Kentish parishes dealt with by the Rev. C. H. Fielding in his *Memories of Malling*. Of these I reject 3 as obviously incomplete. Of the remaining 11 we have 4 presumably plague deaths in 1 parish, 2 apiece in 3, 1 in 1, and in 6 no recorded change, an average of one priest one parish.[1]

The Black Death, like the Reformation and the Great War, gave a violent impetus to forces already in operation. Its effects, if we may judge by Miss Levett's statistics of the Winchester manors,[2] were by no means everywhere revolutionary, but it must have strained, almost to breaking point, the resources of the landlords, who had to farm the same land with a moiety of hands. For anything that feudal custom could do to help them, the corn might rot in the fields. With ruin staring them in the face, there was nothing for it but to hire labour on whatever terms it could be got. Here was the poor man's opportunity. With the demand for his services so far outrunning the supply, he would have been more than human if he had failed to exact a rate of wages far in excess of anything hitherto dreamed of, and the lord, in his turn, could hardly have acquiesced quietly in this operation of economic forces that was turning his world of custom and stability upside down. To make matters worse, such serfs as the plague had left above the soil to which they were bound, could not fail to be struck by the disparity between their own immemorial standard of life and that of the free labourers who went about from manor to manor exacting whatever wages they

[1] The deaths are all in the year 1349, except one apiece in 1348 and 1350. The chances of natural death are at least balanced by those of incompleteness in the record.

[2] In vol. v of *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History*.

chose. They therefore took every opportunity of throwing up their holdings and decamping, a punishable offence, but one which, with the imperfect police arrangements of those days, was more likely than not to go unpunished. And so the lord of the manor found the serfs on whose services he and his forefathers had depended, first halved by the plague, and afterwards thinned by desertion, and going to swell the ranks of free and fluid labour.

It is easy to understand the feelings of the unfortunate landlords. They had grown up under an order of things that they had believed to be just and permanent, and for which a by no means unfair case could have been made. The serf or villain was, in effect, a small tenant holding his land by a perpetual contract of service. He could not be evicted, and the manor court at which the law was declared by the suitors, if it prevented him, as a soldier is prevented to-day, from deserting or agitating for better terms of service, likewise prevented the landlord from grinding his face. The system was thoroughly in accord with the orthodox philosophy of the time, which assigned every man his due place in the social hierarchy, and made spiritual rather than worldly advancement the supreme object of human effort. Could one of these old landlords have come back to his old haunts during the Napoleonic wars or the hungry forties, could he even visit us to-day, it is more than doubtful whether he would see reason for exalting the advantages of a money economy and free competition over the custom of his fathers.

Regret it or not, no power on earth could have adapted the old organization to the swiftly changing circumstances of that time. Many of the landlords had the practical sense to make the best of a bad business, and lease their demesne land to farmers; some took advantage of the Flemish demand for wool by turning arable to grass, an expedient frought with grave results in driving labour off the land; others again purchased labour at monopoly rates. But English landlords are not of a class that lends itself readily to new ideas, and they can hardly be blamed for their unwillingness to realize that the old system had got to be scrapped.

The crisis was a national one, and the King's High Court of Parliament, as representing the nation, was the obvious body to deal with it. But Parliament was dominated by that very landowning class that had been hardest hit by the new conditions. In the newly formed Lower House the most powerful and active element consisted of the knights of the shire, who were drawn from just those very farming landlords who were feeling the pinch, probably even more

acutely than the great lay and ecclesiastical magnates with their broad acres of grazing land. This class of country gentlemen had been fortified by an institution peculiar to England, which was to throw not only the local government but also the administration of all but the gravest matters of criminal justice into its hands. The old shire courts had been for a long time falling into decay, and it was only after a series of tentative expedients, dating back to the reign of Richard I, that the most important of their functions were transferred to justices of the peace, gentlemen of the county nominated by the Crown. The reign of Edward III saw the consolidation of this system which, while it prevented the local government falling into the hands of the King's officials, could not fail, in the long run, to eventuate in a rural despotism, which might or might not be benevolent, of the class from which the justices were drawn.

Parliament dealt with the situation with perfect fairness according to its lights, such fairness as every average body of well-meaning individuals displays when it is fortunate enough to be judge in its own case. They were thoroughly convinced of the righteousness of the old system and of the cupidity of the men who coined money out of their employers' necessity in so unchristian a spirit. They therefore sought to stabilize the old and presumably fair price of labour by legislation, and to make it a criminal offence for anybody either to demand or accept wages in excess of pre-plague rates. As it became apparent that laws of this kind were—through the connivance of the landlords themselves, who preferred dear labour to no labour—in danger of becoming a dead letter, they proceeded not only to strengthen, but to weight them with savage penalties. This severity, while it had scarcely any effect in retarding the process of economic change, was productive of continual irritation and class bitterness, culminating, finally, in class warfare.

It was in 1376, the penultimate year of Edward III's long reign, that Parliament had its great opportunity of establishing its position as the representative assembly of the English nation. The country was in a state of profound depression as a result of the disastrous French war, of crushing taxation, and of the corrupt gang that surrounded the King. Parliament had not been called for three years and much was now expected from it. The reforming party had redoubtable leaders in the dying Black Prince, who according to his lights was a patriot and a gentleman, and in Sir Peter De la Mare, the Speaker, who is the first Englishman of whom it is possible to speak as a great Commoner. On the other

side was the Black Prince's younger brother, John of Gaunt, whose palace of the Savoy served as the medieval and aristocratic equivalent of Tammany Hall.

The Commons presented through their Speaker, who himself spoke out fearlessly against corruption and waste in high places, no less than 140 collective petitions. In some of these the bias of the landlord against the labourer and of the merchant oligarch against the craftsman is only too apparent. But the nation was not disposed to be critical of an assembly which feared not to stand up against the monied leeches who were bleeding its resources. One of the King's ministers, Lord Latimer, who was proved to be not only a swindler but a traitor into the bargain, and the King's financial agent, Richard Lyons, a profiteer guilty of colossal frauds on the revenue, were impeached before the Lords, and even John of Gaunt dared not stand out against their being sentenced, through his mouth, to imprisonment and fine. Sentence was passed on a number of other offenders including Alice Perrers, the King's mistress, and Lord Neville, his steward. Even the death of the Black Prince did not check the activities of the Commons, who finished up a session of unprecedented length by forcing on the King a council of selected magnates to control the administration.

Such was the Parliament which has ever since been styled " the good ". The sequel was soon to show how much significance was to be attached even to most brilliant of Parliamentary triumphs. " What do these base and ignoble knights attempt ? " had been John of Gaunt's comment on the Commons' proceedings, and no sooner were they dissolved than he was in the saddle again. He cooly proclaimed that the last Parliament was no parliament at all, sent the new council packing, and restored the impeached peculators to their former dignities, while the courageous Speaker was sent to prison and was in danger of being sent to the scaffold for his pains. John of Gaunt next proceeded to rig the elections of another Parliament which was, not without reason, known as the " bad ", and being packed with his supporters and skilfully manoeuvred, not only undid the work of its predecessor, but also imposed a poll tax of a groat a head upon the people. It was now evident that whatever powers the Commons might claim and exercise they were not their own masters, but liable to be the tool of any person or clique that happened to be in the ascendant. The time was ripe for the people to take their salvation into their own hands.

CHAPTER VII

THE TWILIGHT OF THE MIDDLE AGES

1

Christianity on the Wane

Medieval Christianity is the product of two main streams of purpose that are not always easy to separate in practice. There is the great, organized power of the Church, centred in Rome and striving to maintain and increase that power in a spirit not very different from that of old Rome. There is, on the other hand, a series of efforts on the part of earnest and ardent devotees, to get back from the Law of official Christianity to the spirit of Christ Himself. The vitality of Papal Rome may be gauged at any time by her ability to control and avail herself of these recurrent uprushes of spiritual energy. At the beginning of the thirteenth century she had taken a fresh lease of life from the inspiration of Saint Francis and Saint Dominic. It was her version of Christianity that expressed itself in the Gothic Cathedrals and scholastic philosophy of the age of Saint Louis.

But the struggle with the Hohenstaufen had left Rome on the verge of spiritual bankruptcy, and the removal of the Papal court to Avignon was the outward and visible sign that the glory had departed from the throne of Peter. But the spiritual Empire of Rome was still intact, the vast centralized organization remained in being, as a tree, hollow and rotten within, may sprout leaves in their season and retain all the outward signs of health.

In England there were many signs that all was not well with the Church. Edward I had stood up to her pretensions in a way that would have infallibly brought down an interdict upon the Kingdom from an Innocent III, when he had promptly outlawed the whole of the clergy for refusing to pay taxes, and the Church had allowed her bluff to be called and paid up duly. In Edward III's reign the English King and Parliament showed plainly that they would stand no nonsense from a Pontiff who was suspected, not without reason,

of being a pawn in the hands of our chief national enemy. The claws of Rome were cut by the two great statutes of Provisors which, if it had been consistently enforced, would have stopped the Pope from exercising rights of patronage in England, and of Praemunire, which barred the right of Churchmen to take cases out of the King's Courts to Rome. When, in 1365, Pope Urban V presented his bill for the tribute conceded by John, with arrears up to date, the demand was referred to Parliament and turned down unanimously, with a denial that John had had any right to make such a submission to a foreign prince on behalf of his kingdom. It is said that a few years later, when the Archbishop of Canterbury tried to revive this claim, he was informed by the Black Prince that he was an ass. In 1371 Parliament petitioned for, and obtained, a ministry of laymen. It is an interesting sidelight on the English attitude to papal claims, that when the Pope, acting in the cause of France, placed Flanders under an interdict, which the Flemish priests piously respected, a sufficient number of willing blacklegs was at once imported from England to break this clerical strike.

The Church, whose influence and prestige were already considerably on the wane, was terribly hard hit by the plague.[1] The duty of any parish priest worth his salt must have taken him, day in, day out, into noisome hovels swarming with the deadly fleas. The monasteries, too, with their inmates herded together in dormitories, almost certainly rat-infested, must have been ideal breeding grounds for the bacilli. And the effect of suddenly having to flood the ranks of the Church's staff, secular and regular, with any unsuitable or uneducated recruits who could be drafted hugger mugger into the service, cannot fail to have been disastrous, or to have lowered the standard of clercial life, even if we do not assume it to have been specially high before.

The diminished prestige of the Church was all the more reason for men to whom any doubt of Christianity was unthinkable trying to work out their salvation, not through the medium of the priesthood, but in spirit and in truth, by " onehead ", as they expressed it, with God. The fourteenth century is, in fact, the golden age of English mysticism. This word, with its suggestion of haziness and abracadabra, is perhaps an unfortunate one for describing what is often the direct opposite to superstition, in that it tends to substitute for external magic a state of the soul. The essence of all mysticism, Christian and non-Christian alike, is contained in the words " the

[1] See above, p. 251.

Kingdom of God is within you". To a rich ecclesiastical body, depending for its prosperity largely on the magical powers claimed on behalf of its priests, such a belief is obviously not acceptable without drastic qualification, and may become a deadly menace, even when those who hold it sincerely believe themselves to be loyal churchmen.

Mysticism was flourishing all over Western Europe in the fourteenth century, which is the age of Ruysbroeck, Tauler, and Thomas a Kempis. It is not too much, however, to say that as notable, though less known, work was produced in England as in any European country. In the year of the plague died Richard Rolle, an Oxford student, who turned anchorite, and insisted that though men ought to do good works and though certain works are in their own nature commendable to God, yet there is no merit in them unless pure love of God is their motive. Love is, to Rolle, the life and impelling force of Christianity; it is the heart that counts. "Force thyself," he pleads, "in all that thou mayest, that thou mayest be no worse than thou seemest." His work is carried on by Walter Hylton, who maps out the path in more systematic detail in his *Scale of Perfection*, and to whom some critics have even tried to assign the authorship of the *De imitatione Christi*. Then there is the group of anonymous treatises centring round that little masterpiece called *The Cloud of Unknowing*, of which the author was probably a Carthusian monk. Last of all comes that sweet and childlike anchoress, Lady Julian of Norwich, to whom God vouchsafed the vision of the whole universe, "a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut, lying on the palm of my hand," and, she thought, "it lasts and ever shall, for God loves it."

English mysticism has its distinctive charm which, though it may be hard to analyze, is unmistakable to the sympathetic reader. We should say that its chief element is a certain naive sincerity, a homeliness, that is not more marked in the Robin Hood ballads than in such a candid conclusion as that of Hylton's exquisite little treatise, the *Song of the Angels*. "Lo," he exclaims, "I have told thee in this matter a little, as me thinketh; not affirming that this sufficeth, nor that this is the soothfastness in this matter. But if thou think it otherwise, or else any other man savour by grace the contrary thereto, I leave this saying, and give stead to him; it sufficeth for me to live in truth principally and not in feeling." The English quest for God is somewhat less formally systematic than that of the great Continental seekers, it is also, as befits the national

character, intensely practical. With the pure contemplative, the Simeon Stylites or exponent of the Hathi Yoga, the English temperament has no affinity. "Love cannot be lazy," characteristically says Rolle, and Hylton coins the term, "a busy rest," as a description of the peace of God.

All this is perfectly in accordance with the spirit of Gothic architecture. The earnest uprush of stone is here reflected in the soul, it is the burning will to attain that "wonderful onehead" which, Hylton tells us, "may not be fulfilled perfectly, continually, and wholly in this life . . . but only in the bliss of heaven." This medieval mysticism also resembles Gothic in being, almost exclusively, concerned with the will. "By love," says the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, "he may be gotten and holden, by thought never." "It is," and here he is speaking the highest religious thought of his age, "necessary for thee to bury in a cloud of forgetting all creatures that ever God made." That is the strength and weakness of Gothic and the religion that Gothic expressed, on the one hand energy, aspiration, singleness of purpose, on the other, a lack of scope and content that called aloud for the Renaissance. Even the holy Julian was, in her own phrase, "a simple creature that could no letter."

It is from such individual and spiritual Christianity, more than from the rich and centralized Church, that democracy is born. Not entirely, however, for even in the Middle Ages the Church was not above coquetting with democratic theory, as she had her own reasons for setting limits to the power of Kings. It is, however, roughly true to say that the more the overgrowth of ecclesiastical dogma is cleared away, and the nearer men get to the pure spirit of Christ, the greater the bias is likely to be towards the claims of those poor whom most of all Christ took to His heart. As long as Christianity is openly acknowledged, it is impossible, even though Caiaphas himself be its interpreter, wholly to suppress it. It is impossible to prevent some one, among all the millions, thinking for himself, and seeing the central figure of the Gospels not through a distorted glass, but in all His divine humanity, loving the disreputable and outcast, and warring to the death against Mammon, respectability, and formal orthodoxy, wherever He finds them.

St. Francis, though an obedient son of the Church, gave a notable impulse to this movement back to the original Christianity, and it was from among the Franciscans that the great Oxonians were recruited who undermined the foundations of the scholastic dogma.

These were succeeded by a more open intellectual revolutionary in the shape of John Wycliffe, who was an Oxford don and finally a country rector, though of his personality we have hardly any knowledge at all except from his works. Qualify it as he would, Wycliffe's teaching undermined the whole foundations on which the power of the Church was based. He is for breaking down every barrier to the direct intercourse of the Christian with his Maker; he is a foe to the monopolies and magical claims of the priesthood, and he flatly denies their power to perform the daily miracle of transmuting bread and wine into the Saviour's body and blood. On much the same principle as temporal revolutionaries arm the people for the preservation of their liberties, so Wycliffe placed in their hands a spiritual sword in the shape of an English Bible, that every man might henceforth see and judge of Christ's teaching for himself.

Wycliffe was the inspirer of a religious revival that spread like wildfire over England and threatened, for a time, to bring about such a break away from the Roman spiritual domination as actually occurred a century and a half later. The Lollards, a name that most probably means singers, were enthusiasts trying to get back to the faith and practice of primitive Christianity. They included, at one time, not only multitudes of the poor and simple, but many of the landowning class and even some of the nobility.

In their passionate cult of poverty and the simple life they were only following in the steps of Saint Francis, but this time the Church was unable to add the virtue of obedience to that poverty. The Lollards, in their revolt from worldliness, were shocked most of all by the riches and pretensions of Churchmen. They had the audacity to demand, even from the proudest dignitaries, a standard of life in no way superior to that of a Galilean fisherman or Nazarene carpenter. They went further in denying the magical claims on which so much of priestly power was built. Even the crowning miracle of the Mass was fraudulent in their eyes, and such lucrative assets of the Church as relics and pilgrimages they denounced as idolatrous. Strangest of all, they held war to be murder and contrary to the New Testament.

The Church, when she failed to absorb or convert the Lollards, had no choice but to discard spiritual weapons and fall back upon repression with the aid of the temporal power. And so commenced a long and unedifying struggle in which the fires of religious persecution were lit almost for the first time in England. The best for which the Church could hope was to drive heresy below the surface,

and postpone the hour of reckoning for herself. It would have been better for her could she have absorbed Lollardy instead of crushing it. For now she was deprived of that spiritual quickening of which she was most in need, while Lollardy, though damped down, was not quenched, but smouldered on until the Reformation, for which it had prepared the way. As Bishop Tunstall wrote, when the fires of heresy were beginning to revive in 1523, it was no question of pernicious novelty, but only that new arms were being added to the great band of Wycliffite heretics.[1]

2

Christian Democracy Shoots its Bolt

Medieval democracy is a hard thing to understand when judged by modern standards. It is, speaking generally, more personal and less systematic than anything to which we are accustomed. To the modern reformer, poverty is both an evil to be removed and a stigma to be ashamed of; in the Middle Ages the poor man and his poverty were actually sacred in themselves. This attitude we can best understand from a perusal of one who was the most striking democrat of them all, William Langland, author of the alliterative poem called *Piers Plowman*, or at least of the original version of it. He writes as a poor man to poor men, and his ploughman, by a beautiful transfiguration, becomes Christ Himself at the end of the poem. And yet Langland is what we should call nowadays a Tory of the most uncompromising persuasion, and, indeed, takes the labourers to task in a way that no modern Tory would dare to do openly. He roundly denounces the waster who despises the wholesome counsel of Cato to the effect that poverty's burden should be borne patiently, who will eat nothing but fresh flesh or fish:

> "But he has high wages or else he will chide
> And bewail the day he e'er became workman,
> Who curses the King and all his counsel,
> Who made laws to keep the labourer down."

Langland's love and championship of the poor ploughman is none the less genuine from the fact that he is no advocate of Piers trying to "better himself", as we should say. The social hierarchy is ordained of God, and it is every man's duty to play his part in it loyally. The sluggard employer who is behindhand with the wages

[1] Quoted Encyclopædia Britannica, article *Lollards*.

on pay day, the knight who is unable to do his duty of protecting the poor, are equally to blame. There never was a more unsparing critic of iniquity and corruption in high places than Langland. But over rich and poor alike is the moral law of God and Mother Church. What matters most about them is not their earthly lot, but that all are equally sinners striving, though sore let and hindered, after a place in the heavenly kingdom.

Therefore, though this man may be a nobleman and that man a ploughman, the importance of this social difference is as nothing to that of their human and religious equality before God. Twenty may be ten times two, but both are equal in their relation to infinity. Chaucer's pilgrims are not only a mixed party travelling to a shrine, they are pilgrims of eternity, and are brothers in a sense of which our age of class consciousness and class warfare can hardly conceive. We catch the note of it in such rough strains as

> "Rise up, rise up, brother Dives,
> And go with us to see
> A dismal place, prepared in Hell,
> To sit on a serpent's knee."

The medieval equivalent of the millionaire may be consigned to Hell with the heartiest goodwill, but even on the Serpent's knee, along with the inevitable King and Pope of pictured Dooms, he is Brother Dives; his modern successor may spend half his sustenance on deserving charities, but even on this earth between him and Lazarus there is a great gulf fixed.

Medieval democracy may have had a different standpoint from our own, but its theories lack nothing in boldness or variety. So long as the Church and State were opposing each other's claims, doctrines of ecclesiastical or lay absolutism were not likely to pass muster unchallenged, and the will of the people might be a convenient card to play against the other party. Thus when the Emperor, Louis of Bavaria, was at loggerheads with the Pope, a group of political theorists which included the great English nominalist schoolman, William of Occam, boldly proclaimed that as all power was derived from the people and vested by them in the Emperor, the Emperor therefore could control not only the State, but the Church, and confiscate, or rather resume at will, the Church property whose ownership she derived from him as the people's representative. Another school of theorists, somewhat later in the fourteenth century, introduced the democratic principle into the Church itself, in order to set a general representative Council above the Pope.

Medieval democracy did not always stop short at politics, but challenged the whole social system and even the institution of property. The communal life of the monasteries, the cult of poverty inculcated by Saint Francis and his friars, the example of primitive Christianity and the reading of Plato's *Republic*, could not fail to provoke speculation of a communistic tendency. The great schoolmen, with their habit of inquiring into first causes, made no exception of property, and St. Thomas Aquinas, closely followed by Duns Scotus, does indeed justify the institution, not, like the French Revolutionists, as a natural right, but rather as a human convenience. Less orthodoxly inclined thinkers, proceeding on the same lines, might easily write down the ownership of property as a natural wrong. Of such was Wycliffe.

He was no less of a revolutionary in political than in religious doctrine. Not only did he denounce the anomaly of a wealthy priesthood, but he arraigned the whole institution of property as inconsistent with the preaching and practice of Him who had not where to lay His head, and whose followers brought their goods to a common stock. Wycliffe, however, was no Tolstoi, to follow such principles to their logical conclusion, and the practical consequences of his theory evidently frightened the Master of Balliol and Rector of Lutterworth. So, like the practical Englishman he was at heart, he got out of the difficulty by a subterfuge which, though it has been employed by all trimmers since the world began, has never, except by Wycliffe, been frankly formulated. "God," he says, "must serve the Devil," much as Wycliffe himself served that arch-intriguer John of Gaunt, even to the extent of apologizing for his patron's murder of a man in a church where he had taken sanctuary. It is not necessary to follow Wycliffe further through the windings from which he manages to escape from communistic idealism to a comfortable acceptance of things as they are.

But the average mind has no liking for compromises, and Wycliffe's qualifications of Wycliffism have little except a personal interest. There were others who had not the Oxford don's gifts of caution and subtlety. Irresponsible friars, as we gather from a passage in *Piers Plowman*, went about preaching propaganda of a more or less Bolshevistic tendency, culminating in the frankly levelling doctrines proclaimed for some twenty years by the revolutionary leader John Ball, an itinerant Kentish priest. This man's utterances, though we have to rely on so hostile a witness as Sir John Froissart, have too authentic a ring, and put the case too forcibly against the

existing order, not to be substantially genuine. He was of a type which, though it has figured more than once in English social controversies, has never succeeded in establishing a permanent hold on the English mind. He was a logical and abstract theorist.

"My good friends," he is reported to have said, "matters cannot go on well in England until all things shall be in common; when there shall be neither vassals nor lords; when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves . . . Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve?" And the whole of his teaching was crystallized in the famous couplet:

"When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?"

Who indeed? When Christ Himself is depicted on the walls of certain country churches of this period as the workman He was, bleeding from wounds, but crowned with a halo of tools.[1]

During the fourteenth century a mysterious impulse of social unrest was stirring the Western nations. It is the time of the Arteveldes in Flanders, of the tribune Rienzi at Rome, of the Ciompi revolt in Florence, of the Jacquerie, or peasant rebellion in France. In Germany the revolt of the poor was to hang fire until the Reformation. The root feeling of all the trouble seems to have been a feeling that the existing order of things failed to give Christ's poor the goods and privileges that they ought to enjoy in any Christian community, and perhaps an intuition that the Christian dispensation was itself giving way to one harsher and less human, which proceeded not from Christ but Mammon. It was the forlorn hope of the democracy, always implicit in medieval Christianity, to make itself effective—and it everywhere failed.

It is characteristic of England that her own peasants' revolt had comparatively little inspiration from abstract or even religious theory. There was more of Robin Hood than of Wycliffe in it, and it arose, as nearly all English—as distinct from Celtic—labour troubles arise nowadays, from a very concrete sense that the poor man was getting less than his due, that the bosses were not playing the game. Edward III died in the same year that John of Gaunt rigged the House of Commons, and proved that the real mastery of Parliament lay with the magnates. For the next four years things went from bad to worse. The new King, the Black Prince's son Richard, was a child, and though his Uncle John was at least

[1] See *English Medieval Painting*, by T. Borenius and E. W. Tristram, pp. 29–35.

enough of a gentleman not to oppose his succession, the outlook was dismal. The war dragged on its expensive and disastrous course, and as England could neither hope to conquer nor resign herself to losing France, the difficulty of financing it became ever more acute. In 1380 a Parliament was induced to grant a fresh poll tax deliberately designed to shift as much as possible of the burden on to the labourers and workmen who, it was asserted, had got all the wealth of England. This tax, whose incidence was so arranged as to fall with disproportionate weight on the poorer districts, was regarded in much the same light as an income tax with no exemption limit would be to-day.

It was the last straw. Goaded beyond endurance by grievances that had been accumulating ever since the Black Death, the peasantry of the Southern and Eastern counties burst into revolt. The rebels at first carried all before them. Their wrath was especially directed against two classes, the lawyers, who were suspected of defrauding the poor by their subtleties, and the monks, not for any religious reason but because the great monasteries were the hardest landlords. The Prior of Bury was hunted down and killed; the monks of St. Albans were forced solemnly to renounce the chartered monopolies that had enabled them to tyrannize over townsmen and villagers. Meanwhile a Kentish army, formidable from the presence of a good many disbanded soldiers, marched on London and, co-operating with another force from the Eastern counties, succeeded in effecting an entry, not without the connivance of some leading citizens from within. They burnt John of Gaunt's magnificent palace of the Savoy, they sacked the headquarters of the lawyers at the Temple; only the Tower, in which the King and his ministers shut themselves up, held out against them. Even while a settlement was being arranged by the King and his councillors at Mile End, the extremist section of the rebels had been getting out of hand. The Tower was rushed, the mob hunted out and murdered the Archbishop of Canterbury and another minister responsible for the collection of the poll tax, a senseless pogrom of Flemings began. Terror reigned in London. A certain section of the men was determined not to disperse for any concession, and this section included the most formidable fighting leaders. They had this to be said for them, that they were dealing with liars, and that once they ceased to exercise pressure on the government, their cause was lost. But rightly or wrongly, extremists are seldom popular in England.

At last the citizens of London, who had so far regarded the

whole dispute with comparative indifference, took alarm, and threw in their decisive weight on the side of order. There was another meeting between the boy king and the still formidable remnant of the insurgents; precisely what happened is not very clear, but it seems that the extremist leader, Wat Tyler, was bent on forcing a quarrel, that he got killed in a scuffle with some of the King's followers, and that the fourteen-year-old King succeeded in quieting the mob by a supreme act of bluff, until overwhelming forces could be summoned. Those of the men who had gone home, putting their trust in princes, were rudely undeceived when their charters of manumission were all annulled, and the law was allowed to take its course of stern, though not indiscriminate punishment. The economic influences that made for the abolition of villeinage were doubtless not sensibly affected, but medieval democracy in England had made its great effort, and had been decisively crushed. Henceforth the tendency in Church and State is towards reaction.

3

Unity of Language

It is now time to notice what is, though the least obtrusive, probably the most important development of all in the shaping of a united and civilized nation. It was during the reign of Edward III that the English language, after long eclipse, may be said to have taken its place definitely as the national tongue, the speech not only of boors but of literature. It is during this reign that English became the language of legal pleadings, and that Chaucer began to write poetry which is as fresh and almost as intelligible to-day as when he set pen to parchment; it was in the early years of the ensuing reign that Wycliffe performed his great work of translating the English Bible. French, which had for long been the language of the ruling class, became a sadly debased jargon after the political connection with France was severed, we hear of the French of East Norfolk and Stratford-atte-Bowe, which would have probably drawn from a genuine Frenchman some such reply as "Me no speak Ingliss".

The importance of this change can only be appreciated when it is understood that the English spoken by Chaucer was no mere revived dialect, but a new kind of language, with certain definite points of superiority over even the great classical tongues. This is the more astonishing when we reflect that not only was English just

emerging from a long period of obscurity and illiteracy, but that it was just the contempt and base usage into which it had fallen that was the cause of its great advance.

An analogy from nature will best serve to shew in what this advance consisted. Consider the difference between the highest insect communities, and those of men. In the hive or ants' nest, the body of each member is to some extent adapted to the functions he has to perform. With men, there are no adaptations of body, except in so far as certain muscles may be developed by use; what distinguishes the soldier from the gardener is that one uses a rifle and the other a spade; in short, men do not adapt their bodies but select their tools. It is much the same with words. Greek and Latin were the highest examples of inflectional languages, themselves a notable advance upon the more common agglutinative languages, in which whole words are stuck together to create new meanings, at the price of infinite complication. In inflectional languages it is the rule to express differences of tense, case, gender and mood by changes in the form of the word itself. Schoolboys know well to what an extreme of complicated ingenuity it was possible for a Greek or Roman to adapt his words to express the minutest shades of meaning. The tendency of English is to leave the word, as far as possible, alone, and to use what are known as auxiliaries, and even differences in position and emphasis, to express, in a handier and simpler way, differences of meaning equally subtle. "Do please come—I was just on the point of coming—I should have liked to come—why couldn't you have come?" and so on. The facts, of course, are not so simple as might appear from this summary statement; English has its inflections and Greek its auxiliaries, neither could do without them, but whereas we may say of Greek that its whole tendency is inflectional, we may say of English that, to an unprecedented extent, it is an auxiliary or tool-using language.

This was not always so. The first Anglo-Saxon invaders had brought with them an inflected language not unlike modern German. It was not altogether uniform; there were marked differences between its four main dialects, corresponding to the four chief tribal stocks of Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon and Kentish. Had Englishmen been left to work out their own destinies in peace, it is probable that a common language would have been evolved not dissimilar from the German group. But any chance of normal development was shattered by the repeated shock of foreign invasions. The Danes, when they swept back the West Saxon power behind the Thames

and Watling Street, brought their own language with them, one of the same stock as the English dialects, but sufficiently far removed to be practically a foreign tongue. A process of compromise took place, the conquering minority generally accommodating themselves to the native speech, but in the same sort of way as a Chinaman accommodates himself to English. The root sounds were picked up readily enough, but the honest Viking had small care for the inflectional niceties cherished by Bede and Cynewulf. The result was not only that a considerable number of Danish words crept into the language, but that the English words got considerably knocked about in the process of assimilation, and began to lose all but the simplest of their inflections.

Meanwhile in that part of England which had successfully repulsed the first Danish invasions, all hopes for the English language seemed to be centred. King Alfred, both by his influence and writings, helped to keep its purity from contamination, and the West Saxon became the literary dialect of England, with an elaborate system of inflections, and such products to show as the *Battle of Maldon* and the Old English Chronicle. Then occurred what must have seemed the final linguistic catastrophe, in the shape of the Norman Conquest. The castles were owned by French-speaking barons, the monasteries, which were the seats of learning, had their higher posts filled with French-speaking monks. The grand old English of Alfred had now become the patois of boors; the upper and educated classes spoke French. The stream of native literature diminished to a trickle, and the purity of the Wessex tongue was gravely impaired, owing to the slovenly habit of merging the sound of most inflectional vowels in that of short e.

But Norman became Englishman, and the French language lost ground rapidly with the separation from France. The native tongue came into its own again, but only after an enormous assimilation of French words, and a process of mutilation that one might reasonably have expected would have rendered it as inferior to the old West Saxon and Northumbrian English as modern Hindustani is inferior to the old Sanskrit. What had actually happened was that from being an inflectional, it had become, to a greater degree than any other, a language of the type which we have described as auxiliary or tool-using. This King's English of ours is not the direct descendant of the West Saxon which had been the literary language before the Conquest. This was passed by, on account of the very excellence of the culture it expressed, which made it more proudly conservative

and less susceptible to change than the already mutilated dialects of the Danelaw. The choice lay between Mercian and Northumbrian, and the remoteness of Northumbria from the centre as well as the merciless ravaging of the Conqueror put her out of the running, or rather relegated her to the post of language-giver to the Northern kingdom.

So it was the Midland tongue that won the post of honour, and this, apart from the advantage it possessed in being the speech of the Londoners, on account of the apparent illiteracy that rendered it malleable and capable of being adapted to the new and simpler kind of language that the unconscious genius of the nation was evolving. It was a conspicuous instance of the foolish things of this world confounding the wise, and when we are half inclined to smile at some broad provincialism of ploughman or shepherd, we little think that we are listening to the last sounds of the speech hallowed by the lips of Alfred. But that is, after all, the way of evolution. Could an intelligent observer have been imported from Mars some time towards the close of the Mesozoic age, he would hardly have guessed that not from the enormous Saurians were the lords of the earth to be descended, but from insignificant little creatures that scuttled and hopped about almost unnoticed.

By the opening of the fifteenth century England had acquired a national tongue. The last writer of any note in the Wessex dialect was Trevisa, a contemporary of Chaucer. The obstacle to national unity that was created by the existence of three or four competing dialects, so different that books had to be translated out of one into another, was now eliminated. There were still changes to be made, final e's to be dropped, one or two letters to be discarded with the introduction of printing presses, obsolescent forms to be dispensed with, but the dialect of East Mercia, much transformed, was now definitely English, and at a most happy moment a " well of English undefiled " had sprung to the surface in the writings of Chaucer. It was a language of which any nation might be proud, simple and practical, as befitted the English character, and yet with unlimited possibilities of rich and poetic expression. There was no carrying the new simplicity to its logical extreme ; if it was more convenient to talk of oxen than of oxes, then by all means retain the old form of plural and let the devil take consistency. A great and unique advance was the scrapping of the senseless analogy by which the names of things were expected to range themselves under the male and female genders. The French schoolboy has at least this advantage

over his English fellow, that he has not to rack his brains to remember whether an English cabbage is a lady or a gentleman. Simplicity and commonsense are eminently characteristic of English, though an unfriendly critic might accuse it of certain slovenly and illogical tendencies which, he might say, are also born in the national temperament.

4

A Century of Weak Government

"Villeins ye are, villeins ye shall remain," are said to have been the words of the boy Richard II to the poor men who, when reaction had triumphed, asked him for the fulfilment of his kingly pledges. Be that as it may, the sequel of the revolt parted him forever from that pathetic loyalty that many of them appear to have entertained for his person. Henceforth he was left to deal, as best he might, with the wealthy magnates who overshadowed the throne and, with their troops of armed retainers, were fast coming to overshadow law and Parliament.

Edward I's wars of expansion, followed by his grandson's wars of conquest, had put too great a strain upon the splendid administrative machine by which the reign of law had been maintained in England as in no other medieval nation. For the first time since Stephen's reign the central government had become too feeble to cope with the disruptive tendencies of feudalism. The ruinous expense of the war, and the way in which the royal estates had been encroached upon, had left the crown dependent on what it could induce Parliament to concede, and Parliament, as John of Gaunt had already shown, could be the tool of anyone powerful enough to pack it.

The history of the reign is that of a struggle between a high-spirited young monarch, who was determined to govern as well as reign, and a few great men who were too selfish to have any consistent policy, except that of strengthening their own hands by weakening those of their sovereign. Richard's first attempt to govern with the aid of ministers of his own choosing was ruined by a combination of noblemen headed by John of Gaunt's younger brother, the Duke of Gloucester. After an actual resort to arms the magnates triumphed; the young King was publicly threatened with the fate of Edward II, and the inevitable packed Parliament murdered every prominent loyalist who did not succeed in escaping, besides voting a huge sum of public money to the bosses of the victorious

faction. These Lords Appellant, as they were called, had no loyalty even to each other, and the King, skilfully profiting by their divisions, managed to get the reins of government back into his own hands, and for a few years maintained his position with conspicuous tact and moderation.

It was only a truce. Gloucester and his friends were biding their time for a second coup. Richard determined to strike first. He was completely successful; blood paid the price of blood, and Parliament was duly packed—this time in the King's interest. Richard was determined to end the farce into which Parliamentary government had degenerated, and solve his own and the nation's troubles by the establishment of an unfettered monarchy on the French model. It would have taken a very wise and far-seeing statesman to have realized how, in essaying this plausible scheme, he was running counter to the whole trend of national development. Richard, who had patched up something like an *entente cordiale* with France and had taken an infant French Princess to wife, had none of the English instinct of compromise. He pushed his theory to its logical conclusion and, what was almost worse, talked about it in language more befitting a Caesar than a King of England. He banished the two most powerful of the surviving magnates by an act of sheer arbitrary tyranny, and he actually got Parliament to delegate its powers to a packed committee of his supporters. When, after two years of royalist triumph, John of Gaunt's son, Henry, one of the two banished noblemen, took advantage of Richard's absence in Ireland to make a snatch at the crown, the whole edifice of Caesarism collapsed like a house of cards. Richard gave in with hardly a struggle, was deposed, and, of course, murdered.

His supplanter, who mounted the throne as Henry IV, had succeeded to an almost impossible task. By hereditary succession, he had no claim to the throne even after getting rid of Richard. His title was, in fact, Parliamentary; he lacked the small amount of divinity that ordinarily hedged a medieval King, and those who had put him on the throne need feel no particular scruples about turning him off again. The first years of his reign were enlivened by chronic rebellions; the whole of Wales flamed into a war of independence under Owen Glendower; the quarrel with France smouldered on and an invasion of England was, at one time, seriously threatened. Even with the addition of Henry's Lancaster estates, the resources of the crown were hopelessly inadequate to its needs, and Parliament treated the King as if he were a fraudulent bankrupt

pleading before a meeting of creditors. They doled him out funds, but under the most humiliating conditions, supervising and cheese-paring intimate details of his private expenditure. They took care that he should not get a penny till he had formally acceded to their demands, in other words, till redress preceded supply.

There is no doubt that, in spite of the theories of the lawyers who still treated Parliament as if it were the King's feudal court, Henry IV was, in practice, a limited and constitutional monarch in the fullest sense of the words. Parliament was so much the master of the King as to render his position farcical. But it was by no means so certain that Parliament was its own master, or that the Lower House, which held the power of the purse, represented anything but a few powerful persons and interests. It is at least to the credit of the Commons that they did make a stand against the packing of elections by the sheriffs and the abuses of livery and maintenance by the magnates. But the central government was weaker than ever, and its weakness was the opportunity of the great feudatories, with whose power an assembly, representative only of the landed and mercantile interests, was as yet powerless to cope.

Henry IV was supported on his rickety throne not only by temporal but by spiritual props. He had therefore to pay political blackmail to the Church, which was now far upon the downward path which led to the Reformation. The Lollard revival had failed to quicken spiritual life within her fold, but had got enough hold on the people to alarm the worldly-wise politicians who guided her destinies. Not the least of Richard II's crimes had been his unwillingness to persecute. No such scruples troubled Henry, who cheerfully assented to a statute which authorized the Church of Christ to hand over those whom she chose to designate as heretics for the secular power to torture to death by fire. This inaugurated such an era of persecution as England had not previously experienced, though the King, being a thorough-going worldling, was an exceedingly slack persecutor. His eldest son was more actively pious, and gradually the alliance of Church and State succeeded in breaking the back of Lollardism. But the Church had merely succeeded in alienating and driving below the surface the spiritual enthusiasm of which she was herself so sorely in need.

Harassed and unloved, Henry IV closed his troubled life, bequeathing his difficulties to his son and namesake. The new King, a hard and intensely efficient young man, had no mind to continue his father's course of concession and compromise with his subjects.

The time was ripe to stake the fortunes of his dynasty on the magnificent gamble of a foreign war. The long debate with France was still undecided, and it happened that France, with her King mad, was torn asunder by the disputes of two aristocratic factions. Flanders, which was still the great market for our wool—though not the only market, since we had started a flourishing cloth manufacture of our own, and had, besides, taken to supplying the looms of Florence—had now come under the lordship of the Duke of Burgundy, who led one of the contending factions, and whose vast possessions might easily provide the nucleus of a new, middle kingdom between France and Germany. Henry V was quick to perceive that by attacking a France divided against itself he would be enjoying an advantage such as Edward III had never dreamed of. He therefore, in the true spirit of *Realpolitik*, repeated that monarch's claim to the French crown, regardless of the fact that he himself had, by the principle of heredity to which he appealed, no right even to that of England.

It is only fair to add that something of the crusading ardour fired Henry's mind. The menace to Christendom from the power of the Ottoman Turk was palpable, and Henry's father had entertained somewhat vague aspirations after going on a crusade and dying at Jerusalem. In a long exhortation to the young Henry as Prince of Wales, the poet Hoccleve had expressed a hope that Christian nations would lay aside their differences and combine against the infidel. But Henry's way was not that of persuasion but of the sword. He would unite England and France under his leadership for the rescue of Christendom. He was in earnest, as Edward III never was, about making the conquest of France a reality. No mere plundering raids would serve his purpose; if he was to win he must reduce the French strongholds, and he had now an artillery, primitive still, but capable of breaching the stone walls of a medieval fortress.

The grand purpose of his strategy was to master the lower Seine valley with a view to attacking Paris. His first step was therefore to provide himself with a base at Harfleur, at the mouth of the river. Having accomplished this feat, he proceeded, with a mere remnant of his original army, to wander off along the coast to Calais, and was brought to battle at Agincourt, in much the same way as Edward III had been at Cressy, by a French army of the Armagnac, or anti-Burgundian faction, outnumbering his by at least five, and according to some estimates, as much as ten to one. The French

feudatories had forgotten every lesson of the previous war, and their dismounted knights, crowded together, crushed beneath the weight of their armour and floundering on boggy ground, were incapable of defending themselves. Henry V gained, with trifling loss, perhaps the most sensational victory in military history, a victory which he disgraced by a massacre of prisoners, and which, strategically, decided nothing except that he should get away safely to Calais. The moral effect was naturally immense. A King of England had at last a united nation behind him, and even Parliament voted supplies with comparative generosity.

In the subsequent campaigns Henry, though he conducted his operations with methodical efficiency, was dependent less on his own prowess than on the dissensions of his opponents. The French faction fight became more irreconcilable than ever, and he was able to go methodically about his task of reducing Normandy by a series of sieges. Only when the threat to Paris became really imminent did the Duke of Burgundy consider the expediency of joining forces with his sovereign to prevent an English conquest of France. But at a conference with the French King's son, the Dauphin Charles, on the bridge at Montereau, he was stabbed to death, and this not unnaturally threw the new Duke into active alliance with Henry. A treaty was signed at Troyes by virtue of which Henry was to marry the mad King's daughter, to govern France in his name during his lifetime, and then to succeed him. Paris, which was under Burgundian influence, then threw open her gates to the allies.

The situation was, of course, an impossible one. Even if Henry had succeeded in carrying his arms from the Channel to the Mediterranean and forcing the Dauphin and all his forces to capitulate, he could not have maintained his position as ruler of a France that would never have reconciled herself to an English King supported by an English army, and with an inevitably hostile Burgundy on his flank. But even with the help of Burgundy, his resources were wholly insufficient for the task in hand. The home country soon tired of the expensive luxury even of the most glorious war. "Woe is me," groans a chronicler of the time, "mighty men and the treasure of the realm will be foredone about this business!" Parliament ceased to vote adequate supplies, and Henry was so hard up for recruits that he tried, unsuccessfully, to levy forces abroad. The Dauphin was no doubt a fool and a coward matched against a consummate soldier, but nothing could prevent the spirit of French patriotism, which had been merely dormant, from rekindling sooner or later into a blaze.

Henry V, whose troops had already suffered one sharp reverse, was still painfully enlarging the area of his conquests when he died and left a baby son to succeed him. His brother, the Duke of Bedford, who acted as regent, was a thoroughly competent commander, but he had neither the men nor the money to do much more than hold his own, especially since the Franco-Scottish entente came into play, and the French armies were stiffened by an invaluable Scottish contingent. For seven years the English on the whole had the upper hand, though without much prospect of obtaining a decision. Their push southwards was just strong enough to reach the line of the Loire, which they hoped to force by capturing the fortified town of Orleans. An English force accordingly sat down before the town, but its numbers were so inadequate that it was not even possible to surround or blockade it. The English push was in fact exhausted; a counter-attack, well pushed home, could hardly fail of success.

It was at this crisis that an inspired peasant girl, called Jeanne Darc, succeeded in firing her countrymen with something of her own mystic and patriotic ardour. The little army of besiegers was quickly overwhelmed; success after success rewarded the French arms, and it was evident that the English expulsion from France was now only a question of time, though as a matter of fact it took nearly a generation of fighting to accomplish the inevitable. It availed nothing that Jeanne fell into the hands of the Burgundians, was sold to the English, tried by a French ecclesiastical court, and burnt as a witch in the market place at Rouen. The spirit of French patriotism was not to be extinguished by quenching the brand that had fired it. In 1435 the Duke of Burgundy at last changed sides, and the next year he and the French King entered Paris together. The French were now excellently led and had found in the cannon a weapon even more powerful than the long bow. But the English clung on to Normandy and Guienne till the middle of the century, when the collapse came with startling suddenness, and by 1453 Calais and the Channel Islands were the only remains of our dominions in France.

It would have been well for us if Agincourt had been a French victory, or if Jeanne had been able to clear France of the English in one sweep of enthusiasm. Unfortunately the war kept on demoralizing England and draining her resources for not far short of forty years. The great gamble of Henry V for the establishment of his House had—though he did not live to see it—turned out a ruinous failure, and to crown it all, his French bride transmitted to

their son her father's strain of madness. Henry VI has left an imperishable name as a patron of education, he was one of the foremost musical composers of his time, in the Church he has taken his place beside Joan of Arc as a canonized saint, but his gentle piety was unequal to grappling with a task that might have baffled the strongest of rulers.

It might have seemed as if the bad old days of Stephen, with their "devils and wicked men", were about to return. The magnates, now a small and wealthy class, rich with the profits of wool-growing, were completely beyond the control of a defeated and bankrupt government. The weakness of the law brought back the evils of feudalism in a new form, that of livery and maintenance. The small man, even when he was a fairly substantial landowner, found himself driven to obtain from some great one the protection that the law could not give, and the price of protection was service. The result was that a great nobleman might be able to take the field with an army of hired retainers capable of bidding defiance to the King himself, and that a monarch with no standing army of his own was always at the mercy of a baronial combination.

The famous collection of letters of the Paston family in Norfolk reveals a state of things that is at once anarchial in practice and law-abiding in theory. The two are blended in the oddest way. Everybody of any means seems to have been busily involved in litigation, and yet to have had no hesitation in conducting regular sieges, or raids of armed retainers, by way of helping the suit along. The fact of the letter of the law being respected did not prevent judges from being bribed, juries intimidated, and elections rigged, nor the influence of a great man from being enough to avert the consequences of the most high-handed tyranny.

It is the same story with regard to Parliament. In form and theory it was actually a time of constitutional progress. The important advance was made of framing petitions for new legislation in the form of bills, which dictated the exact form of the proposed change, instead of leaving it to the King and his advisers to make it in their own way. But in reality Parliament had almost ceased to assert itself except as the tool of whatever aristocratic faction happened to be uppermost. In 1430 a statute was passed drastically cutting down the franchise in the counties to forty shilling freeholders, a very high qualification considering the dearness of money in the fifteenth century. In 1445 it was enacted that only gentlemen capable of becoming knights should be returned as members, yeomen

being specially excluded. Any leanings to democracy that Parliament might have derived from the now decaying shire courts were thus legislated out of existence. The dominating element in the Commons, the Knights of the Shire, consisted of gentlemen representing other gentlemen, and usually serving lords. These same gentlemen, or others like them, as justices of the peace, controlled the whole machinery of local government.

As the French war dragged to a close the inefficiency of the central government reached its lowest depth. The army in France was starved, the navy scrapped—we could no longer provide for the safety of our own coasts. The King looked helplessly on while Beauforts, De la Poles, Nevilles, Plantagenets, intrigued for power. In 1450 a rebellion, curiously similar in its course, if not in its cause, to that of Wat Tyler, put London into the brief possession of the Kentish mob led by Jack Cade, a war veteran. This time there was no question of abolishing villeinage, which had by this time nearly abolished itself. The peasants and old soldiers were furious that the work of Harry the Fifth should be undone by ministers who were actually suspected of having sold provinces to the enemy. This rebellion was easily got under, but it was the ominous prelude to civil strife waged from less clean and patriotic motives.

The best service that the magnates could now render their country was to unite in committing hari-kari by means of a faction fight *à outrance* among themselves. This was precisely what they did during the third quarter of the century. An elder branch of the royal family, represented by the Duke of York, challenged first the right of the King's. or rather the Queen's clique of aristocratic favourites to misgovern the land, and afterwards the Lancastrian title to the throne. In the confused and intermittent struggle known as the Wars of the Roses, the country, as apart from the magnates and their retainers, stood aside as far as practicable. On the whole the towns and the civilized lowlands of the South and East favoured the Yorkists, whom they believed to stand for strong government and the encouragement of trade. But the quarrel was generally recognized as one for the two teams of magnates to fight out among themselves and in their own way.

Once only was popular feeling seriously aroused. This was in 1460, when the King had fallen into the hands of the Yorkists, and been induced to consent to an arrangement whereby the Duke should succeed him to the exclusion of the Prince of Wales. The strong-minded French Queen Margaret lost no time in summoning to her

banner the magnates of the still hardly civilized North with their retainers, and marching southwards with a considerable army, not only surprised and killed York himself, but got as far South as St. Albans, where she defeated an army which the Neville Earl of Warwick had got together for the defence of London. This march had two important effects. By massacring her prisoners of gentle blood the Queen had set a precedent that was faithfully followed by both sides for the remainder of the war, and, as one side or the other had the upper hand, a pretty clean sweep was made of the heads of the great houses. Moreover, the North countrymen, who had passed their lives in an atmosphere of Border strife and foray, did not recognize the rules of the game, and plundered freely from the towns and villages on their way. The wrecked and reconstructed churches of Stamford bear silent witness to the terror that swept up the road from the North. This for the first and only time during the war produced something like a genuine explosion of popular feeling. Even that iron woman, the Queen, hesitated to push on to an unfriendly London, and while she waited, the slain Duke's son, who now claimed the throne as Edward IV, arrived by forced marches from Wales amid the joy of the citizens, and gathering up willing followers all along the line of march, followed up the Northern army into Yorkshire, where, after a hammer and tongs fight in a blizzard, he completely overthrew it.

This was by no means the end. It was a matter of three years before the Lancastrian North could be reduced, but even with Henry in the Tower and all his prominent supporters slaughtered or banished, the position of a Yorkist King was scarcely more enviable than that of his predecessor, overshadowed as he was by the power of the mighty Warwick. England was not large enough to hold the first of her strong Renaissance kings and the last of her barons capable of matching his resources against those of the Crown. In 1469 began a series of kaleidoscopic changes more reminiscent of a Punch and Judy show than of a struggle where principles are at stake. First King Edward, who has married into the formerly Lancastrian family of Woodville, tries to shake himself free from Warwick's control; Warwick strikes unexpectedly, makes his sovereign a prisoner, and puts him back on the throne in the trust that he will now have learnt his lesson of obedience to the power behind it; the King next surprises Warwick, turns him out of the realm, and abandons himself to enjoy from henceforth the sweets of real power; Warwick returns, having patched up an alliance with Queen Margaret

and the exiled Lancastrians, turns Edward out of the country and puts back Henry VI on the throne; lastly Edward, having begged assistance from the Burgundian court, lands in Yorkshire with a few followers, slips through unopposed to London, recruits an army, defeats and kills Warwick, wipes out Margaret's army in the West, and having got rid of Henry's only son on the battlefield, concludes the business by making the saintly Henry himself share the usual fate of deposed majesty.

That a Yorkist monarch was now firmly established on the throne was of trivial importance compared with the fact that the weakness of the central government was changed to strength. This was by no means due to any special ability on the part of the new King, who was as slack at the council board as he was vigorous in the field, but simply to the fact that the King was now at last able, with normal good management, to live of his own. For when a magnate was convicted of treason, which was the same thing as being on the losing side, he forfeited not only his head but his estates, and the proceeds of a succession of victories had proved a veritable windfall to the Crown. Moreover Edward IV, relieved of the incubus of French possessions, actually discovered the secret of making an invasion of France pay, by getting her King to buy him off with a substantial annuity. Between this year, 1475, and the last of his reign, 1483, he only summoned one Parliament, not for the purpose of obtaining money, but in order that they might obediently register his determination of putting a troublesome younger brother, George, Duke of Clarence, to death. So long as the King could keep the peace, Parliament, on the rare occasions he might choose to summon it, had no power to coerce him. Redress of grievances might hang fire indefinitely so long as there was no need for supply.

The purging of the upper ranks of society was not yet complete. Big, sensual Edward IV had no sooner indulged himself into the grave, leaving a boy heir, than first the Protectorate and then the Throne were seized by his only surviving brother, Richard. This remarkable young man was a true child of the Renaissance, not unlike that equally maligned product of the age, Caesar Borgia. With businesslike dispatch he made away with every magnate who stood, or might stand, in his way, but even the hardened conscience of fifteenth-century England was pricked when it became more than suspected that he had disembarrassed himself of the rightful King and his brother. Richard, who showed promise of being an excellent ruler, had no basis of loyalty on which to establish his throne. After

one abortive rebellion, a candidate of the House of Lancaster was put up in the person of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, a Welsh nobleman with the slenderest hereditary claim, but of outstanding ability. Richard, who was betrayed by his nobles, was cut down, shouting treason, on Bosworth Field, and the victorious claimant ascended the throne with the title of Henry VII. The path was at last cleared for firm government under a competent sovereign.

5

Gloom and Jeremiads

It was, with the brief interlude of Henry V's victorious career, a century of gloom and humiliation that ended with the Wars of the Roses. The joyous exuberance of the springtide and greenwood songs gives way to a note of ever-increasing pessimism. Even before the death of Edward III there is a sense that all is not well with England. This finds voice in a pamphlet by a monk called John of Bridlington, in which the misfortunes of the nation are attributed to its sins, and which is couched in the form of a prophecy—the wish being evidently father to the thought—of a great national revival culminating in the conquest of France by the Black Prince.

The reign of Richard II is a time of almost unrelieved depression. The picture in *Piers Plowman*, in which Meed, or corruption, reigns unchecked, confirms that of Chaucer, who in the one guarded poem in which he deals with public affairs, laments that all is lost for lack of steadfastness.

The excellent John Gower, who makes up in length for what he lacks in inspiration, takes up the tale towards the end of the reign, with an uncompromising denunciation, in Latin, of the whole social hierarchy from the King downwards. The one thing on which all writers of this time appear to be agreed is that the once merry England is going to the dogs. "Alas," groans another Latinizing Jeremiah, "how great a desolation is there of England!"—loss of sea power, peril of invasion, dishonesty of merchants, worse than dishonesty of clergy, pestilence, depleted manhood, Christ hardly known! And a poem of considerable merit, written in alternate Latin and English, laments how England was once called the gem of nations and flower of manhood, whereas now,

> "Gone is that honour,
> *Traduntur talia somnis.*"

It is significant of the weariness engendered by the French wars that there is even a tendency to apply Christian principles to our dealings with other nations. "I know not," writes Gower

> "how charity may stand
> When deadly wars are taken in hand,"

while Hoccleve, a civil servant who atoned for a great deal of dull verse by one or two inspired stanzas, thus addresses England and France :—

> "If but of you might be read or sung
> That you were one in heart, there is no tongue
> That might express how profitable and good
> Unto all people it were of Christian blood."

As the glory of conquest and the merriment of national youth departed from England, the fire of genius died out of her literature. Chaucer and Langland found no successors; the stream of verse, if it does not actually dry up, becomes turbid and sluggish. No amount of pious resurrection will ever succeed in extracting much of living interest from Gower, or even Lydgate, despite of undeniable beauties scattered amid his verse, while as for Hoccleve, he only shows himself worthy of his master Chaucer for the moment when he is lamenting him. Not until the age of Walpole was English verse to sink so far beneath the level of ordinary prose.

The brief sunshine of Henry V's glory in France produced a certain lifting of the gloom—we have the noble song of Agincourt, which moves to the time of a triumphal march :

> "Our King went forth to Normandy
> With grace and might of chivalry,"

but even before the King's death the glamour was growing dim, and the long agony of Henry VI's reign plunged the country into a deeper gloom than before. To the horror of foreign war is now added an even greater horror of civil war, which was to sink into the consciousness of nation and determine its policy down to the time of the Armada :

> "Oh, it is greatly against kind and nature
> An English man to corrumpe his own nation!"

is the cry of one Yorkist partisan, who likens England to a garden overgrown with weeds that need mowing down before the flowers can appear, a piece of advice that the Yorkists knew well how to translate into action.

How deeply the horror of war had entered into the nation's soul is best seen in the last and most splendid version of the Arthur

saga, that of Malory. No one with an ear for the music can mistake the utter gloom that Malory contrives to spread, like the pall of night inwoven with stars, over his account of the hero King's last and direst battle against his own subjects—" never was there seen a more dolefuller battle in no Christian land ! "—and the cry of Arthur is that of Malory's England : " Alas this unhappy day ! " He even pauses, contrary to his custom, from the narrative, to upbraid his countrymen for the fickleness and disloyalty that have wrought them such deadly woe.

It is easy to scoff at Jeremiads and their authors, but where the most sensitive and enlightened spirits of a country are obsessed by a sense of its decadence, we may be sure that they are referring to some real and serious evil, even though they may be wrong in thinking it mortal. No doubt the Lancastrian and Yorkist age in England was one that might have seemed to justify the gloomiest apprehensions. In both Church and State the promise of medieval civilization appeared to be falsified. Since the failure of the Lollard revival, the spirit of worldliness had become dominant in the Church, and as for the State, the Parliamentary experiment of the fourteenth century seemed fated to succumb either to feudal anarchy or monarchic despotism, whichever happened to prevail.

Nevertheless, an observer might have discerned certain signs of promise even in the darkest days of national humiliation and civil war. Fifteenth century England was very much alive, and if it is a time of dullness and pessimism in letters, in architecture there is a different tale to tell, while in music we may fairly be said to have given a lead to Europe. The Renaissance, triumphant in Italy, was astir in England, and beneath the ruin of medieval summer the forces were at work that were to generate another spring-tide of creative genius.

6

Weavers, Adventurers and Business Men

The fifteenth century, except for the deceptive glamour of Henry V's French conquests, is one of the least glorious in our history, judged by the usual standards. Nevertheless it is marked by victories, of more substantial value than any achieved by lance and long bow. Up to the middle of the fourteenth century, England, though her great war with France had been essentially a trade war, was commercially a dependent nation. The bulk of her export trade

was in raw wool, which she shipped to Flanders to be worked up into cloth by the skilled Flemish craftsmen. This was much encouraged by the Crown, which found in it a fruitful source of revenue and had, since the reign of Edward II, appointed staple towns through which the whole of the exported wool was compelled to pass by law, the merchants who had the monopoly of the trade being incorporated into a company, the first of those great regulated companies of independent traders that were to play so prominent a part in our commercial development. So important was the export of wool considered, that the Chancellor of England was made to sit on a woolsack, as a sort of permanent reminder.

During the fourteenth century the growth of the towns and craft gilds was providing a home market for English wool, and the heavy export duties on the raw material acted as a powerful protection for the nascent cloth manufacture. Between the year 1354 and the accession of Henry VIII, according to Professor Ashley, the export of English cloth multiplied itself sixteenfold. As the home demand for our fleeces grew, the prosperity of the Staplers, as the exporters of wool were called, steadily declined, and a deadly blow was struck at the cloth-weaving Flemish towns, which were dependent upon English fleeces and felt the stress of English competition. All through the fifteenth century the "Lancashire of the Middle Ages", starved of its wool, was losing its former wealth and prosperity; its cities could no longer maintain their population. This state of things was thoroughly appreciated in England, and there is one rhymed pamphlet of Edward IV's reign, the author of which urges his countrymen to take a Shylock's advantage of our monopoly by selling abroad only the inferior kinds of wool, for which the foreigners will have to pay just as much as they would for the best, which we should keep for our own looms.

While England was slowly strangling the Flemish cloth manufacture, she was waging a struggle no less momentous to break down the shipping monopoly of the formidable Hanse League, which included most of the German and Dutch ports, and during the fourteenth century treated the Baltic and the North Sea as virtually its own preserves. In spite of her insular position and one or two naval victories, England had been content to let the bulk of her commerce be carried in foreign bottoms, and even so great a King as Edward III had so far yielded to an intrigue among wool merchants as, for a short time, to fix the staple in England, so that our English wool had to be consigned at the ports to foreign ships. The fact is

that the needy English Kings had two very good reasons for favouring foreign shipping at the expense of English. The first was that they were often dependent on the foreigners for loans, the second that these foreigners were ready to pay handsomely and on the nail for their privileges, whereas the English merchants were experts in circumventing the revenue officials.

The final establishment of the staple at Calais at least allowed English wool to be carried in English ships across the Channel without exciting German jealousy. But to carry cloth to Flanders was like taking coals to Newcastle, and it was obviously impracticable to force this new trade through the bottle-neck of Calais. The English merchant who shipped a cargo of cloth might look for his market as far North as Iceland or as far East as Danzig. But the Icelandic trade was a Danish monopoly, and to sail Eastward was to encounter the full force of Hanse opposition, which might take the form of piracy by sea or expulsion from the market on land.

In 1406, the shippers of cloth were incorporated by Henry IV under the appropriate name of Merchant Adventurers, a development of the Mercers' Gild. Unlike the steady-going staplers, they were veritable thrusters of commerce, forcing their way to customers without much help from the home authorities and usually in the teeth of foreign opposition. The Danish King might put diplomatic pressure on Henry VI to veto the Iceland trade, except *via* his own staple and custom-house at Bergen, but the trade went merrily on in the teeth of prohibition. Indeed, scant delicacy of scruple appears to have troubled our master mariners of the fifteenth century. Open piracy was all too frequently practiced, and such harbours as Fowey in Cornwall provided secure bases for the operations of these early gentlemen adventurers.

The great struggle was with the Hanse for a right to share in the Baltic and North Sea trade. In this our merchants received little aid from the Lancastrian Kings, except for a few years when the strong hand and powerful navy of Henry V were available for their protection and complaints of German piracy ceased. It was just such a fight as was to be waged by the Elizabethan sea-dogs to break the Spanish monopoly in the West, and with little or no support from their own Kings, the English merchants, matched against the powerful organization of the League, were at a terrible disadvantage. A company specially incorporated for trade with the Baltic was unable to survive, but the Adventurers held on, and in spite of all odds, the volume and scope of English trade steadily increased. They at first

made the false move of fixing their staple at Bruges, but this did not suit the rich cloth-weaving burghers of that town, who thought it in the nature of things that the wool should come to them straight from the sheep's back. The Adventurers, therefore, shifted their headquarters to the neighbouring town of Antwerp, which aspired to be not a producing but a trading city, a mart for the whole civilized world, and thence they catered for a wide market, extending into Southern Germany. There were many vicissitudes and a good deal of sheer piracy on both sides, and it was only towards the end of the century, when the Hanse was beginning to go to pieces and a strong business monarch sat on the English throne, that the tide could be said to have turned definitely in our favour.

Meanwhile our enterprising merchants were pushing our trade along the ancient route from the Mediterranean. Our friendly connection with Portugal, that was to be a cornerstone of our policy for centuries to come, was established before the end of the fourteenth century, and during the fifteenth Lisbon swarmed with English traders. With the Spanish Kingdoms we were almost equally successful in pushing our trade. It was in 1458 that a Bristol merchant, named Sturmys, made the first English bid for a share in the Levantine trade that had hitherto been monopolized by Italians. The Genoese promptly proceeded to capture and plunder this presumptuous interloper's ship, but the government at home managed to exact reparation by seizing and holding to ransom all the Genoese they could lay hands on. Sturmys was but the pioneer of what was to grow into a flourishing trade with the Near East.

Thus in the fourteenth century, if England was suffering from a spiritual decline, she was wide awake to the main chance, and busily laying the foundations of her industrial and commercial prosperity. Just as the thirteenth century is distinguished by an ardent, if imperfect spiritual energy and aspiration, so the fifteenth is characterized by the hustling materialism of a middle class just beginning to feel its feet and to realize that money may talk as loudly as birth. In the great cloth-working district of East Anglia, with its enormous perpendicular churches, so strangely out of proportion to the needs of the present-day population, we may catch something of the spirit of this time, and it lives again for us in the correspondence, happily preserved for us, of some of these new-rich families, Pastons, Stonors, Celys—for the knowledge of the three R's was no longer a clerical nor even a masculine monopoly, and success in complicated business operations is not compatible with illiteracy.

The business man was coming into his own. The organization of the craft gilds, on which our industry was based, was steadily becoming less democratic, and the master-craftsman, working up his own materials in his own shop, was being gradually replaced by the capitalist employer, on the one hand, and the hired worker on the other. The richer trading gilds were establishing a supremacy over the associations of handicraft workers in the same material, and gilds were tending to become highly exclusive clubs of comparatively rich men, controlled by ever-narrowing oligarchies. No longer was it possible for the apprentice without connections to count on setting up for himself as an independent master-craftsman. There was a tendency for certain of these groups—the drapers for instance and the saddlers—to get control over others that worked in the same material, and, in fact, to become associations of employers to which these humbler workers stood in the light of labourers. The class of journeymen, or hired workers, became more numerous as time went on, and they developed enough class-consciousness to form unions of their own, often under the convenient fiction of honouring some saint.

It is in Bristol that we can get most closely into touch with the go-ahead, commercial spirit that inspired the Adventurers of the fifteenth century. There is a sufficiency of still existing material for the imagination to form some idea of what it must have been like in these palmy days of its merchant princes. There was first and foremost the great Canynge, whose austere, hawk-like features are chiselled on his tomb in Saint Mary Redclyffe, which he rebuilt, and part of whose great house is now a furniture shop hard by. This man owned upwards of sixty ships ; he at one time practically monopolized our trade with Iceland, and Edward IV was his guest at the house in Redclyffe Street. There was Sturmys, already mentioned as the pioneer of our Levantine trade, Shipward, who bequeathed to posterity the sumptuous church of Saint Stephen, with its slender, unbuttressed tower, an architectural *tour de force*, Frampton, whose beautiful effigy lies in the Church of St. John above the gate, to name only one or two of the most prominent.

Fifteenth century Bristol must evidently, even to a modern eye, have been rolling in money, and its oligarchy of rich business men were not lacking in the old Greek virtue of magnificence. If they played the skin game with its utmost rigour—and nobody can doubt this who is acquainted with fifteenth-century correspondence, or has gazed on the alabaster features of Canynge—they knew also

how to spend nobly, and for the honour of their native town. But of spiritual aspiration there is none. Saint Mary Redclyffe is nothing more nor less than opulence translated into architecture, the spacious magnificence of the Kings of Commerce. The contrast is more striking if we look at the stone figures, piled up in a corner, that served for corbels in the Early English Church which Canynge's structure replaced. These present a spectacle, intolerably poignant, of the human race crushed to the earth beneath a load of sin. The impression one gets from the new Saint Mary's is that the only sin worth bothering about is poverty.

The impression is strengthened if we go out of Bristol on a tour through East Somerset, whose spacious churches, distinguished by their magnificent towers, bear witness to the wealth and munificence of its clothiers and wool farmers, and also to the tendency of the cloth manufacture to expand from the gild-ridden towns to country cottages. We shall get a false impression of fifteenth century England if we visualize it merely as the cockpit of aristocratic factions, or as a defeated and humiliated nation. Whither the new spirit that had replaced the Gothic Christianity was tending was a matter hidden from contemporary eyes, but that the England so frankly zealous in the service of Mammon was, economically at any rate, a rising power, there could be no doubt whatever.

7

The Perpendicular Compromise

This essentially compromising and English spirit is revealed in the so-called perpendicular style of architecture, which reigned supreme during the fifteenth century, but was already worked out in all its essentials by the middle of the fourteenth. The South transept of Gloucester is the birthplace and the Cathedral itself the nursery of what constitutes one of the most significant and unique developments of English creative genius.

Poor Edward II, who had been done to death with hellish tortures in Berkeley Castle, had been offered for burial to the Augustinian canons at Bristol. These unworthy fathers were afraid to give so much as the hospitality of a grave to their murdered sovereign. Abbot Thokey of Gloucester was either a man of more generous spirit, or else had a more accurate sense of the business value of the proposition. For, to the medieval monastery, a practicable saint was worth

more than his weight in gold. Accordingly the poor, feckless, waster-monarch was enshrined beneath a tomb that constitutes the most superb of all examples of decorated tabernacle work, and his gaze, upturned to heaven from between his curling locks, is Christlike in its assurance of perfect peace. The investment proved a profitable one for the monastery, and the stream of contributions to the sainted monarch's shrine, at which the usual miracles were performed, must have caused severe heart-burnings at Bristol.

Thokey's successor, Abbot Wygmore, thus found himself with ample funds for improving upon the massive simplicity of old Abbot Serlo's Norman Transepts and choir. Fortunately, he had not only the money, but there were in Gloucester a fraternity of skilled masons with ideas in advance of their time. Some ninety years previously the monks had tried the experiment of reroofing their own nave, and had made a fearfully botched piece of work of it, so that no abbot was likely to employ anybody but professionals in future. The Gloucester craftsmen had therefore full scope. Their genius was essentially decorative. What they did was to standardize decoration, to cover walls and windows with a uniform, rectangular pattern, the effect of which might be exceedingly opulent, but which could in its very nature bear no organic relation to constructional realities. Such work produced the most impressive effect when, as at Gloucester and Winchester, the skeleton of the structure was already bequeathed by predecessors to whom a church was a building, and not a mere framework to be filled with ornament.

It is not by chance that in looking at some of those panelled walls and chessboard windows we should be faintly reminded of the uniform rectangularity of a modern factory building. For it is just this formal standardization, which we here see in its fair infancy, that is the very essence of modern capitalist production. It was no longer a question of monks or citizens and craftsmen gathered together in one place to put up a House of God that should be the expression in stone of one common faith and aspiration. You settled and paid for a building of the required degree of magnificence. The builder would do his part in providing oblongs of a recognized size that might be filled with statuary or other decoration that could be ordered from gilds of craftsmen in distant towns; so too with the windows, the irregular spacings made by the old, flowing tracery, that put so exacting a demand on the skill of the local glassmaker, were got rid of, and the glass could now be supplied, often from abroad, in rectangular sheets that could easily be fitted into their

framework of mullion and transom. Already in religious and secular architecture we can detect the first stirrings of the capitalist spirit.

But the perpendicular style was directed to other and nobler ends than those of standardized decoration. As befitted the Renaissance, the supreme need for which architecture catered was that of light. The dim mysterious radiance that struggled through the coloured glass of windows that were often little more than slits, was no longer enough. Even the flowing tracery of the decorated style was not of sufficient strength to sustain such enormous areas of glass as the East windows of York, Winchester, and Gloucester. Wall space was everywhere reduced to a minimum, and in old parish churches, even where the rest of the fabric was left alone, it was seldom that the lancets or round arches of the East wall were not scrapped to make room for as big a window as the fabric would stand. The Lady Chapel at Gloucester, which was built more than a hundred years after the transformation of the Norman choir, is little more than a skeleton fabric to accommodate a blazing expanse of glass.

Spaciousness as well as light was needed in this new birth of the human intellect. Like the Parthenon, a religious building aimed less at expressing solemn aspiration than clear and serene thought. But the Englishman, with his instinct of compromise, was not prepared to abandon himself unreservedly to the classical proportions and horizontal lines of the Italian cathedrals. In certain aspects, indeed, the tendency is towards strength and constructional simplicity. The decorated windows are saved from the meaningless extravagance of the French flamboyant style by being caught up, as it were, and held fast in a rectangular framework. And by gradual stages the ground plan of the church itself approximates to the rectangular form. The distinction between nave and side aisle is emphasized as little as possible, and the tendency is for the aisles to be pushed out on either side of the choir, sensibly detracting from the unique importance of the altar and Mass sacrifice, and significantly minimizing the distinction between priesthood and laity symbolized in the division of choir and nave. Finally, in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, we attain to the simplicity of one, vast aisleless hall, vaulted over with sumptuous fan tracery, another innovation of Gloucester masoncraft. If, as befits the place, one is moved less to spiritual aspiration than to solemn and spacious thought, something of the Gothic uprush survives in those ribbed bouquets of stone. The style is, in fact, a compromise, but a lovely

and harmonious compromise, between the new intellectuality and the old faith.

Gorgeous beyond our imagining these buildings must have seemed when every niche contained its saint and every window its proper glass, when walls and effigies glowed with colours long since faded away. Where money was not lacking—and in the fifteenth century it was being made with unprecedented rapidity—the independent crafts were able to fill the rectangular framework with the most lavish ornamentation. Chantry chapels, opulent of detail and colouring, were available for those whose means might run to some remission of a sentence in purgatory, or for devout gildsmen. The monumental masons were kept fully employed, and for those who could not afford solid tombs, enriched with weepers and heraldic devices, there was available the skill of the worker in brasses. The art of figure sculpture, life-sized and diminutive, in alabaster was one developed to a high pitch of excellence by gilds or firms of " alabaster-men ", whose works were in demand all over the country. The wood carvers displayed their mastery in such glorious rood screens as those of Shoreham in Kent and Cullompton in Devonshire, which successfully applied the principles of fan tracery in stone to their own very different material ; the carved misericordes of elaborately canopied stalls show that the Gothic exuberance of fancy is by no means dead ; the stone vaulting is no more successful in its kind than the elaborately carpentered roofs adorned with angels and other carvings, that span countless perpendicular naves ; finally the towers and spires are, by general admission, unsurpassed in any period of our architecture.

And yet all the time, surely though unperceived, the faith and democracy that were the very life of Gothic were ebbing away.

Exuberance in detail is accompanied by a gradually loosening grasp upon essentials. The early English church was at once a creed and a hymn, a song in stone sent up to heaven almost spontaneously by the whole body of the people. With the utmost licence to the individual craftsman it could not go wrong because, as the doctors of that time would have put it, each small world, though complete it itself, is complete only as a member of a great world. The microcosmi of craftsmanship fitted inevitably, by faith and love, into the macrocosmus of the building. In the fourteenth century the bands of faith were weakening, in the fifteenth they had palpably ceased to bind. The mere straight-waistcoating of the whole building—walls, windows, buttresses, and all—into an endless

series of upright rectangles is, in itself, a confession of failure. The stone lines could no longer be trusted to soar into anthems of faith—the decorated window had already proved as much—and to confine them within a framework of panelling was better than to let them run wild into the meaningless self-advertisement of the flamboyant.[1] But for all that, a rectangular framework is a lifeless and even a mortifying expedient.

Gothic had been the art of a people, the perpendicular is coming, to an ever-increasing extent, to be that of specialists. No longer is the spontaneous expression that comes to the lips on beholding some elaborately traceried roof or carved screen, "praise God!" but rather, "what a magnificent *tour de force*!" And along with this we often see a lack of conscience in workmanship, a tendency to put all the best goods into the shop window, that too plainly heralds a commercial age. Here we quote Mr. Ditchfield's admirable little handbook on Gothic Architecture: "We have noticed the earnest striving after the highest developments of artistic sculpture and decoration which characterized the early masons. No skill, no pains, no labour were too great to bestow upon the edification of God's House. Now, when faith was declining, the carvers seem only to have thought about saving themselves trouble, and their carving was all shallow and often coarse and hard."

The universal standardization was producing its inevitable effect of annihilating both personal and local individuality. In Wells, for instance, the man with the toothache and the early English statues on the West front are as racy of the West Country as a local farmer's pronunciation of Zummerzet, but the elaborate fifteenth century chantries of Bishop Bubwith and Treasurer Sugar might equally well have enriched any sacred edifice from Berwick to the Lizard. Moreover, the imager in stone has lost the faculty of expressing deep or spiritual feeling—a grosser contrast can hardly be imagined than that between the kings and saints of the Wells façade and the grotesque company of swollen-headed apostles that a later age superimposed to complete the scheme.

Under the influence of the new humanism art was becoming both secular and commercial. The perpendicular style is really an heroic and surprisingly successful attempt to express the things

[1] That it was choice and not incapacity that determined the rejection of the flamboyant style by English architects is suggested by a window in the choir of Peterborough Cathedral, a perfect specimen of flamboyant tracery, as early as the fourteenth century.

of God in terms of Mammon. But the combination was too unnatural to last, and even before the catastrophe of the Reformation religious architecture was giving place to secular. The glory of the Tudor age was the house not of God but of man, and most of all of the rich man.

The comparatively peaceful conditions that resulted from the reign of law and freedom from invasion were signalized by the rise of the house, as distinct from the fortress, the spacious and well-timbered residences and manor houses a few of which are still standing inhabited, and which add so picturesque a feature to the country landscape. The freedom and growing prosperity of the towns is reflected in such beautiful old streets as the ravages of fire and modern commerce have spared—conspicuously in the Rows of Chester. A new type of secular building appears, here as abroad, to fulfil the demands of burghal life—Guildhalls, Moot Halls, and the like—though we have nothing of this kind in England on the scale and magnificence of Flemish developments.

Even in the villages, a substantial cottage architecture is beginning to displace the miserable collection of mud and wattled hovels. It is significant of the underlying democracy of Gothic that here, in the dwellings of the poor, the principles of Gothic construction are retained longest, down, in fact, to the very close of the seventeenth century. In the West of England, where stone is plentiful, it is not uncommon to come across the door of a cottage that might quite as appropriately serve for a church. Everywhere the construction, adapted to the nature of the local material and the demands of the climate, is thrust boldly, even defiantly into prominence. The cottage interior speaks roundly, with its naked rafters and massive proportions, of the struggle waged by civilized man against the blind forces of nature, just as the Gothic church speaks to him of the soul's aspiration to rise heavenward against the deadweight of spiritual dullness and sin.

Humanism, that produced so glorious a harvest of painting in Italy, was by no means unfruitful in England, though pious vandalism has swept away all but a few isolated relics. Even of these it is not always easy to say whether they are by English artists. The magnificent portrait of Richard II at Westminster Abbey, and the penetrating character study of Richard III at the National Portrait Gallery, are by unknown artists, and therefore, according to the school of expert criticism that exalts Lely above Riley and everything foreign above everything English, by unknown foreigners. It was,

in fact, customary to assume that an English master fit for comparison with a Mabuse or a Ghirlandajo did not and could not have existed. This comforting faith has been rudely shaken by the uncovering, in Eton College Chapel, of a series of frescoes by an indubitable Englishman, of the homely name of Baker, whose mastery of line and vividness of expression would have done credit to the greatest masters of that Flanders in which he seems to have served his apprenticeship. The recent exhibition of English primitives has gone far to justify the belief that English painting, in the period we are considering, was of far greater merit than it has been customary to admit, and that, in particular, a school of native portraiture had arisen towards the close of the fifteenth century, strongly tinged with the influence of the Flanders that lay almost at our doors and was bound to us by so ancient a commercial tie.

The artistic connection between England and Flanders was strongest of all in the realm of music. Here at least England may claim to have been in the van of European progress. We have the evidence of Erasmus who says that the English challenge supremacy in these three things, " in having the most handsome women, of being the most accomplished in the skill of music, and of keeping the best tables." It is characteristic of our attitude towards any artist who has not the recommendation of being a foreigner that perhaps the most considerable musician of the fifteenth century, John Dunstable, whom Dr. Walker characterizes as the earliest composer of any nationality who can be said to have had an artistic style, was, until very recently, so far forgotten in the land of his birth as to have been actually confused with St. Dunstan. In England, Dunstable's influence died with him, perhaps swept into oblivion by the Wars of the Roses. Not so on the Continent and particularly in the Netherlands, where his fame was recognized and his influence potent in the fixing of these contrapuntal laws which resulted in the " Golden Age " of the sixteenth century. It may thus fairly be claimed that the father of modern music is an Englishman, developed in the school and tradition that had grown naturally since the songs of Fornsete in the thirteenth century. For, till the casting of the Puritan blight, England was, among European nations, pre-eminently the land of song.

BOOK II

PROTESTANT CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER I

THE DAWN OF THE MODERN AGE

1

The New Learning

The Gothic ideal, which had produced such glorious fruit, was in a process of decline long before the coming of the Tudors, but the cause must be admitted to have lain largely in its own limitations. A splendid energy was its keynote, but it lacked the intellectual content which sooner or later the human mind, in its incessant blind groping after perfection, is bound to demand. Even the greatest medieval thinkers, even Roger Bacon, thought in shackles; their search for truth was not disinterested. Truth was to be valued in so far as it might lead to salvation. "What doth it profit," cries St. Thomas a Kempis, "to argue about dark and hidden things, concerning which we shall not even be reproved in the judgment because we know them not?" To the medieval God it was thus a matter of comparative indifference whether the talent of intellect were put to a profit, or wrapped up securely in a white napkin of faith, so long as good works multiplied and the heart was sound.

"Be ye perfect," had been the counsel of Christ, but the perfection at which the Church aimed was a perfection of the heart and will. Such a limited perfection is inconceivable, and it has been the salvation of mankind that to some part of it, at least, any permanent limitation of its ideal has been intolerable. The dialectic idealism of Plato, the eightfold doctrine of the Buddha, the divine contemplation that is at the heart of Dante's mystic rose, all these serve not as abiding places but as bridges. The cry is always for light, and the light is always before us.

Before the exuberance of the medieval springtide had passed away from England, signs of another spirit, at once less spiritual and more charged with thought, might have been perceived. For

over Italy, where the spirit of Gothic Christianity had never been perfectly assimilated, a new light had dawned, or, shall we say, an old sun had risen again. The bitter cry of the apostate Caesar, " Thou hast conquered, O Galilean ! " had been true only for a time. The old gods were not dead, but sleeping ; the cult of a harmonious and intellectual beauty, of a life ordered according to reason, never quite died out, even in the Middle Ages. The law, the language, the Imperial dignity of Rome had not ceased—dimly understood and imperfectly rendered, some at least of the classical authors were known and honoured ; to Aquinas, Aristotle in Latin was *the* philosopher, to Dante, Virgil was embodied reason. And the spectacle of Rome, though in ruins, her vast amphitheatre, her Pantheon, Constantine's basilica of St. Peter in which the great Charles had been half surprised into accepting the crown of the West, still remained to fire the imagination. It was for the tribune Rienzi, that strange blend of genius and charlatan, to revive, in the absence of the Pontiff, the forms and splendour of the Roman Republic and publicly to hold the festival of a united Italy. He failed, but his friend and admirer, Petrarch, carried on the revival of the Roman spirit in the realm of thought and letters. At the same time the " eloquent and famed " Boccaccio was not only laying the foundations of European prose fiction, but was the first of the great Italians to be versed in the Greek language.

It was with the coming of Greek that the full glory of the Renaissance burst upon Italy in the fifteenth century. It used to be supposed that Greek came to Italy as a result of the fall of Constantinople, but though this catastrophe undoubtedly had the effect of sending Greek scholars westward, for more than fifty years previously the revival had been going on. Boccaccio had learnt it from a Calabrian called Pilatus, and in 1395 a Byzantine scholar of noble family, Manuel Chrysoloras, had been persuaded to reside and teach at Florence. He gave to the West translations of Homer and Plato, and it was the cult of Plato which, more than anything else, gave its tone and enthusiasm to the new humanism. Under the auspices of the great Lorenzo an academy, one of several in Italy, discussed first and last things on the banks of the Arno, and a lamp, on the anniversary of the philosopher's death, was burned before his flower-crowned bust.

This fifteenth century was essentially an epoch of collection, of critical scholarship, of conscious imitation, in Italian thought and letters. For an epoch of such astonishing intellectual activity,

there are surprisingly few literary works of the first order, between the time of Boccaccio and that of Ariosto and Tasso. Amid an age of enlightenment and a succession of brilliant personalities we look in vain for the achievement of a Rabelais, a Shakespeare, a Cervantes. It was rather the work of Valla and Politian, of Nicholas V and the Medici, by giving back the Athenian " beauty without extravagance and contemplation without unmanliness ", to create the atmosphere in which alone such achievement was possible. It was the golden age of libraries ; the acquisition of a Greek manuscript was as much a triumph as a successful battle, and the priceless Vatican library grew under the auspices of that liberal-minded Pope, Nicholas V.

It is in the plastic arts that fifteenth century Italy will live, not only by what she made possible but by what she brought to finished perfection. The very glory of the recovered classics put the native literature, which had already found expression in the Divine Comedy and the Decameron, somewhat into the shade. The " vulgar eloquence " for which Dante had pleaded seemed a poor and barbarous thing beside the sonorous periods of Cicero and the limpid ease of the Platonic dialogues. Men might express themselves with as much accuracy and finish as the Bishop of St. Praxed's aspired after in his marble epitaph, but it is the curse of Babel that a transplanted language never thrives. In painting, however, there was little enough classical tradition to follow, and the language of sculpture is universal. The thirteenth century had gone down upon the advent of Giotto, that master whose technique so strangely anticipates, in certain respects, that of our advanced moderns. Another century was to pass before the new spirit of inquiry and scientific realism found unmistakable expression in the too short career of Masaccio.

Florence was alike the intellectual and artistic centre, Florence, whose genius was as precise, as clearly defined and rational, as that of Venice was sensuous and passionate. Some of her masters play with perspective like children with a new toy. A cold, inquiring light, like that of the dawn upon the pictured Venus rising from the sea, is turned upon all objects, even the most sacred. The simple faith, which had blindly accepted anything that could claim the sanction of authority, had no place in the new scheme of things. The father of Higher Critics, Lorenzo Valla, might pour scorn on the forged Donation of Constantine, that strange buttress by which the medieval Popes had supported the power of their Church, and when things began to look ominous for him, the Pope himself

found him a safe billet as an official of the Curia. The very priests, as they performed the awful miracle of creating the body and blood of Christ, would sometimes remark, in an undertone, "Bread thou art, bread thou wilt remain! Wine thou art, wine thou wilt remain!"

Above all, life itself was breaking free from the shackles of medievalism, from all shackles. From a vision of a peace beyond the grave, made perfect in God's will, the men of the Renaissance turned to the beauty of this world, a joy by no means passing understanding. It is difficult for us, in our more harassed time, to conceive the urgent intensity of life in the Florence of the Medici, the mightiness of work in the creation of beauty and of delight in its enjoyment. The humble and holy man of heart, who deliberately turned away from the world in order to follow after spiritual joys, became less rejected than inconceivable. Even Christ must be a beautiful and urbane figure, clad in soft raiment, a man of joy, or else a rude hero shattering the very universe with his gesture. No scruples will stand in the way of this new hunger for life; torture and poisoning become fine arts. And yet the forms of medieval Christianity remain after the Renaissance has boxed the compass upon their spirit—a fact of ominous import.

It is characteristic of our national modesty, or perhaps of our incapacity to understand our own distinctive bent, that we should talk of the scholarship and humanism of the Renaissance as things slowly and imperfectly acquired from the more enlightened Latins. It is, of course, true that we had not the opportunity of importing Greek teachers and of acquiring ancient manuscripts that fell to the lot of the Italians, nor had we the nimbleness of mind and the delight in intellectual culture for its own sake that lent such charm and brilliance to the city of the Medici; our genius is more deliberate, less disinterested, but marked by a certain earnestness of concentration, a determination to grapple with all the facts, that makes less for brilliance than durability.

England's debt to Italy and subsequently to France, during the Renaissance, was immense and freely acknowledged. But at no time was she content to be merely a pupil. What she acquired she made her own and used in her own way. The very suppleness of the Italian made him inclined to throw his own civilization overboard in order to become a perfect Platonist or Ciceronian. But the oak of British civilization was too tightly rooted to the shores of its native Thames to be dug up and planted by the Ilyssus. Englishmen have ever been too canny, or too suspicious, to give themselves with

enthusiasm to the full current of any new idea, whether this take the form of humanism or Bolshevism.

Besides which, Englishmen had been doing solid, if not showy work on their own account towards the release of thought and the recovery of the ancient heritage. We have already followed the work of Oxford scholars, of Duns, of Bacon and of Occam, in loosening the intellectual bondage of medievalism. We have seen the Protestant Reformation implicit in the teaching of Wycliffe. Nor had Italy by any means the monopoly of the classical revival. Long before Chrysoloras came to teach at Florence, Roger Bacon had insisted upon the importance of an accurate study of languages, and particularly of Greek and Hebrew. He even went so far as to write a Greek grammar. Some knowledge of Greek, though necessarily very imperfect and fragmentary, was kept alive, especially by members of Bacon's order, the Franciscans.

According to their opportunities, Englishmen were also zealous collectors of books and manuscripts. Bishop Grosseteste, the friend of Simon de Montfort, was himself an importer and translator of Greek manuscripts. The tutor of Edward III, Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, though perhaps not a scholar of the first rank, was an ardent and delightful book-lover. Wherever he went his floor was soon covered with piles of books, so that his friends often found some difficulty in approaching him. He met Petrarch, who describes him as "a man of burning ingenuity". Books were to him living friends, the objects of his tenderest, his most lavish affection. "O fitting and appropriate place for a library!" he exclaims beautifully of the ark, which held the tables of the law, and "O gracious love of books!" is the cry that wells spontaneously from his heart. He was an indefatigable collector, and it was characteristic of him and of his England, that though he loved the ancients, literature to him was a living and not a dead thing; his enthusiasm was generous enough to embrace his own contemporaries. "Minerva," he says, "has already visited the Indians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians and Greeks, the Arabs and Romans. Now she has passed by Paris and now as happily come to Britain, the most noble of islands, nay, rather a microcosm in itself, that she may show herself a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians."

This Bishop of Durham not only collected books, but did invaluable work in examining and often preserving from destruction the treasures of other libraries that he visited. Early in the fifteenth century a monk of Bury, of whom we know nothing but his name,

John Boston, was travelling from library to library throughout the whole of England, compiling a thorough and invaluable catalogue of their contents with the opening lines and the date of each author's birth and death. We need only mention the work accomplished during the fourteenth century in the study of Hebrew, a most important factor in the growth of a culture one of whose chief glories is its Bible. Of Nicholas de Lyra who died in 1340, the present Provost of Eton says that he was the greatest exponent of the literal sense of scripture that the medieval world can show, and his critic and brother Franciscan, Henry of Costessy, is cited by the same high authority as displaying an insistence on the literal sense and constant reference to the original Hebrew that would have rejoiced Bacon's heart. Truly, if the scholar was abroad in Italy, he was up and doing in England as early.

Scholarship, like most other good things, did indeed suffer a decline in the dark days that closed the Hundred Years' War, and then saw the country divided against itself. It was only towards the end of the fifteenth century that England's greatest intellects began, with one accord, to go to school in Italy, and brought back the best of Italy and Athens to England. The first of a brilliant group was the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, William of Selling, who, on his second visit, on an embassy to Italy, in 1486, took with him the young Linacre. He brought back to his priory a valuable library of Latin and Greek manuscripts, most of which was destroyed by a fire caused by the drunken retinue of Henry VIII's visitors. A yet more notable figure was William Grocyn, who also made the pilgrimage to Italy, and despite the fact that he appears to have been generally considered the most learned man of his time—Erasmus calls him a " mine of knowledge " and " the patron and preceptor of us all "—has left to posterity no more than a letter and one or two stray epigrams. It is as a personality that he is memorable, an academic Dr. Johnson, with a ready jest always at command, ceremonious in religious matters to the point of superstition, a staunch conservative by nature—he preferred Aristotle to Plato and is believed to have written against Wycliffe—and the acknowledged and beloved centre of the most intellectual society of his time. It is very characteristic of his John Bullish independence and matter-of-factness that though, in Italy, he had become acquainted with Valla's criticism of that important religious classic, the false Dionysius, he refused to be convinced and, in fact, was about to give an appreciative course of lectures on the subject, when his own investiga-

tions convinced him that the writings were after all spurious, and he bluntly said so.

All of that circle, with the exception of Thomas More, who was of a younger generation, gravitated to Italy and came back refreshed as from the fountain of light. They could not have been more fortunate in their time of going, for the Italy they visited was that of Politian, of Fielfo, of Pico, of Chalcondyles, in short of the most brilliant band of scholars grouped under the most brilliant patron of letters that post-classical Europe has seen. Florence of that time must have been almost dreamlike in the assurance of her own perfection; it was as if life had become free and joyous forever in a Platonic Utopia governed by philosophers, as if its secret had at last been discovered. In a few years the revulsion was to come; the terrible voice of Savonarola was to strike a chill into the hearts even of the most splendid humanists; all this brilliance was to be blasted, by the lightning of his eloquence, into the ashes of vanity and sin; already behind the Alpine barrier were forming the barbarian armies that were to overwhelm Florence and all Italy in a common ruin.

It is no discredit to our English humanists that instead of rushing blindly into the new movement and setting up Athens or Florence in Oxford, they should have put the stamp of their own spirit on the Renaissance and developed it in accordance with English needs. Certainly there was no lack of willingness to learn, nor, having learnt, to impart their knowledge. The opening of the Tudor period is pre-eminently a time not of creative achievement, but of education. Here, as in Italy, the atmosphere had to be created in which great achievement was possible, the seeds had to be sowed for the Elizabethan harvest. And as in the Italy of the fifteenth century, works of permanent literary value are disappointingly few. Dean Colet and his headmaster of St. Paul's, Lily, survive but in their school and in the Eton Latin Grammar, Linacre in the College of Physicians, Grocyn in the impression of his personality. Even the most brilliant and lovable of all, Thomas More, though he did indeed bequeath one English work of genius in his counter-blast to Tyndale, wrote his Utopia not in English but in Latin.

Italy was not the only source from which the light of the Renaissance came through to England. Perhaps the greatest literary influence of all was exercised by one who, though a Netherlander by birth, was, in so far as it can be said of anyone, a man of no nation whatever, a perfect European, who spoke and thought in

Latin, and whose life was one long campaign against stupidity. Holbein has made us familiar with the keen features and long inquiring nose of Erasmus. His scholarship may not perhaps be comparable with that of the great masters of the next century, his character may have lacked the moral earnestness of Luther's and the sweet urbanity of More's; few now care to read the works that sold through so many editions. But, take him for all in all, Erasmus is the representative man of the Renaissance. He was one who hungered and thirsted after knowledge, to whom everything human was of absorbing interest. Dullness, lack of imagination, was the obstacle he everywhere found in the way of mankind, and his *Praise of Folly* was a burning satire against spiritual darkness in high places, in the schools, the law courts, the monasteries, the aristocracy—nothing escapes, not even the throne and the Papal chair.

That this man should, for awhile, have made England his home, that he should have been honoured, appreciated, allowed to exercise his influence to the full, was an event whose importance it would be hard to underestimate. Erasmus imparted distinction to the English Renaissance, he gave its appetite for knowledge a keener edge. He pays the following memorable tribute to the England he saw:

"The men are sensible and intelligent. Many of them are even learned and not superficially either. They know their classics, and so accurately that I have lost little in not going to Italy. When Colet speaks, I might be listening to Plato. Linacre is as deep and acute a thinker as I have ever met with. Grocyn is a mine of knowledge, and nature never formed a sunnier and happier disposition than that of Thomas More. The number of young men who are studying ancient literature here is astonishing."

2

The New Men

The recovery of the classics was the outstanding feature of the Renaissance, and hence it is in the realm of scholarship that we have first studied its manifestations. But the effects of the new outlook on life may be traced in every department of national activity. There is no sudden or violent transition, no point at which we can say definitely, "Here Gothic ends, here the Renaissance begins." In England the one develops gradually, irregularly, and almost imperceptibly out of the other.

Even Chaucer, in whom the joyousness of the Gothic springtide finds its most perfect, if a somewhat belated expression, was, in his last and greatest period, under Italian influence. He, like his own clerk of Oxenforde, had visited Italy and fallen under the spell of the " laureate poete ", Petrarch, and the form of his Canterbury Tales owes much to Boccaccio. During the century following his death we see unmistakable signs of a new outlook on life, of a new type of man to whom we instinctively apply the adjective " modern ". Vivid and human as they are, these Canterbury pilgrims belong to a world incredibly more remote from our own than the social pushers and litigious worldlings of the Paston letters. The difference would be hard to define; there was enough ruffianism and intrigue in the palmiest medieval days—what has disappeared is the outlook upon life which we have ventured to describe as Gothic, its democracy, its faith and superstition, its preoccupation with the affairs of another world than this.

Of the new type of man that Italy was producing, the most conspicuous English example is perhaps John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, whom popular opinion surnamed the Butcher, but whom Caxton exalted as a paragon of moral virtue and science. He, like so many other educated Englishmen, had studied in Italy, and while in Florence had attended the lectures of one of her great Byzantine Greek scholars, Argyropoulos. He turned this instruction to such good account that not only was he a skilful translator of Caesar and Cicero into English, but is reported to have moved the Pope himself to tears by the beauty of his Latin. He was so lavish in his purchases of books that he was said to have stripped the Italian libraries in order to enrich those of England. Unfortunately, books were not the only thing he imported from Italy. He was an artist in cruelty, and when Constable of the Tower, under Edward IV, he outraged the deepest-rooted sentiments of his countrymen by sending some Lancastrian leaders to their death under " the law of Padua "—Roman, not English law. Like that other Yorkist champion, Richard III, he is more than suspected of getting rid of children, those of the Earl of Desmond, and he introduced into England the novel practice of impaling prisoners. So popular was his execution, that it had to be postponed for a day owing to the enormous crowds blocking the way to the scaffold. Nothing could have been more exemplary than his end: " Strike thrice," he bade the headsman, " for the honour of the Trinity ! "

Such characters as Tiptoft's will be familiar enough to anyone

who has studied the history of the Renaissance. The reaction from an ideal of life in which the whole duty of man was to be good and let who would be clever, was expressed in a cleverness that left who would to be good. Whether, on the eve of Bosworth, that very typical young man of the new era, Richard III, actually did feel the despair that Shakespeare depicts, is more than doubtful; we should be surprised to discover that he ever " determined to be a villain ". Like Benvenuto Cellini or Tiptoft, he intended to do the best possible for himself in this world, and if a nephew or a rival happened to stand in the way, he put him out of it with the most complete innocence of scruple. It is probable that Machiavelli himself, could he come to life, would be astonished at the endless modern attempts to whitewash or to blacken his reputation. " Naturally," he would say, " a Prince has got to know his business, and if a certain amount of falsehood or blood-letting comes his way, it may as well be done properly—*noblesse oblige* ! Where, after all, will you find a more charming gentleman or excellent ruler than Caesar Borgia, the prince who might have saved Italy ? "

We have seen how, in the days of the Black Prince, worldliness was on the increase, how even the decorative style had marked the weakening of the Gothic ideal. If Plato had never been translated and if Italy had been as remote as Australia, it is probable that England would have arrived, in her own way, at a state of society closely resembling that which actually obtained at the end of the fifteenth century. And indeed she was by no means disposed to push the new humanism to the extreme lengths of the more logical Latins. Such characters as Tiptoft and Richard III were pretty generally regarded as monsters, and after the little episode of Deighton and Forrest came to be suspected, his kingdom became too hot to hold one of the finest soldiers and most brilliant statesmen that ever sat upon an English throne. The group of scholars who called Erasmus friend were, without exception, sober and godfearing men, occupied most of all with religious and moral problems. To reform the abuses of the Church, to get to the true sense of Scripture, was the object of them all. There was no idea, as there was in Florence, or resurrecting paganism.

Whatever its moral standards, English life, in this Renaissance noonday, was joyous and exuberant in the highest degree. For this we have the witness of what little of its colour time and holy zeal have spared. The light and diaphanous tints of an age of faith, with their other worldly suggestion, had become meaningless. Deep

crimson, gorgeous blue, and mellow gold were the colours with which Renaissance man loved to clothe his person in life, and his effigy or memorial chapel after death. He spread them over vast surfaces of glass, with them he added a new richness to the carving of his rood screens, among them, if he could afford it, he loved to live. It was an age of flowers, and most of all of the English and symbolic rose. The most pleasing part of the War of the Roses is its name, derived, so it is said, from the Inner Temple Gardens. And if we may trust the learned Erasmus, the most charming of all features of English life, from a guest's point of view, was that it seems to have been passed under one perpetual mistletoe.

3

The New Outlook

It is only natural that humanism, the main interest of which was focussed upon this world, should have led to its more thorough exploration. It is curious that the very faith that brands man with the stigma of original sin and enjoins humility and obedience as cardinal virtues should compensate for it by placing man in the centre of the universe, by making the whole universe the setting for the drama of his redemption or damnation. In the beginning God made heaven and earth, the sun, moon, and stars were arranged round the earth on the fourth day, and the culmination of the whole process was man.

"Glory to man in the highest," sings Swinburne, "for man is the master of things," but the process of his mastery has been that of the discovery of his own infinite insignificance, and this in an even deeper sense than the physical and obvious one. For man had placed himself at the centre not only of a physical but of a mental universe. He made his own mental preconceptions the mould into which the facts of the universe must fit. This had been so even with the Greeks; both Plato and Aristotle outlined the framework of their universe from their own sense of the fitness of things, and it had been the essence of St. Thomas Aquinas's philosophy to derive all knowledge logically from the premises of revealed religion. The effect of the Renaissance was to degrade man from his physical position in the centre of the universe and from his mental position as its arbiter, to strip him of his human pride and send him to experience for instruction.

Before the great voyages of discovery, the Western European had lived in a very small universe. His world consisted in a nucleus of Christian communities centring round Rome and Constantinople with an outer fringe of Paynims, a sort of dualism of men made in God's image and men made in the devil's. He had more or less vague notions of wild and monstrous tribes, Hyperboreans perhaps, or men with two heads, dotted about the outer fringe of the world, but these hardly counted. The idea of exploring the unknown was one that did not commend itself to pious minds in the Middle Ages. Ulysses, in Dante's vision, had gone out west into the Atlantic, had sighted land in the shape of the Mount of Purgatory, and very promptly been dispatched to Hell for his pains. When the Portuguese did, at last, start groping along the African coast, under the auspices of Prince Henry the Navigator, who was not a navigator at all but more like a company promoter, the motive was nothing more inspiring than a hunt after gold and slaves. Portugal and Spain, during the next century, are like nothing so much as a pair of competing business houses trying to push their connections. The papal award that secured the West to Spain sent Portugal thrusting round the Cape for India and the Spice Islands, and when the two clashed at the other side of the world, it was only narrowly that war was averted.

This was the first great awakening from the comfortably centralized notions of medievalism. It was to be followed by one still more startling. Magellan may have proved beyond a doubt that the world was round, but at least he left it, where Ptolemy had put it and Dante found it, comfortably in the centre of the universe. But Copernicus, followed by Galileo, reduced it to the level of an ordinary planet, circling, as subsequent astronomers were to establish, with a number of others round a not specially remarkable sun. The Catholic Church was quite right, from her own point of view, in combating this heresy with all her forces. Without centralization Rome would cease to be.

We will glance ahead at some of the landmarks of this humanism that proceeds by the dehumanization of the universe. The so-called "*Éclairissement*" of the eighteenth century struck impartially at every sort of authority and in particular at the key of the position, the mind of man, which Condillac reduced to a mere mass of sensations, and of which de Tracy wrote, "to think is to feel." Almost simultaneously in the nineteenth century appeared the works of Comte and Darwin, the former consigning metaphysics, along with

theology and fetishism, to the limbo of necessary fallacies of the mind on its upward progress, the latter putting the lord of creation into his place among the great brotherhood of living things.

Mathematicians had meanwhile been outraging man's innermost preconceptions by coolly dealing with qualities and notions that his mind told him were absolutely inconceivable, quantities that may be nothing from one standpoint and infinity from another, square roots of minus quantities, systems of four or more dimensions—things that would have horrified the mind of the Greek, with his passion for clearness. In our own days has come Einstein, to reduce the rocks of space and time, on which at least we imagined ourselves secure, to the shifting sands of relativity. How much further the process can go, it would be hard to say, but if those who profess to have set up communication between the living and the dead were to establish their claim, they would but be carrying on the work of Columbus and Copernicus a stage further by demonstrating that as the universe itself is but one among many, so what we know as existence may be an infinitesimal portion of reality. That matter, like all others, must be decided by the facts themselves, but the example may serve to show, with somewhat greater clearness, what we mean by the dehumanization or decentralization of the universe.

We have used the word dehumanization advisedly, because we have wished to point to a danger which, though the humanists of the Renaissance and our own time may not have perceived it, was latent in this new trend of thought. The danger was lest the dehumanization of the universe should carry, as an actual though perhaps not necessary or logical consequence, the dehumanization of man. The medieval assumption that the whole universe centred in the drama of man's salvation had at least the consequence of enhancing human dignity. That supreme importance of the soul is the very spirit of Gothic ; it is the secret of that essential democracy which we have seen underlying the medieval social system. But a time might come when man, no longer a being with a soul, would become a pawn in a political game or a cog in a mechanism. A Barbarossa or a Hildebrand may have been as arbitrary or as unenlightened as you will, but they were more human figures than Machiavelli's Prince, and the medieval craftsman, for all the chances of violence, famine, or disease, may have been a happier and more dignified being than the well-paid, sensibly housed artisan, repeating, week in, week out, some standardized movement in some standardized moiety of a standardized process of turning out a standardized

automobile. The age-long problem, though unformulated, has been how to strip man of all his illusions, and yet at the same time to preserve intact his dignity, his soul.

At the time of which we are speaking, this problem was only in embryo, so far as England was concerned. Certain signs might have been visible to an acute enough observer. England had little part in the first business of discovery, though the Genoese Cabot had set out from Bristol, with the hearty backing of its inhabitants, who had that old Irish tale of Saint Brendan to fire their imaginations. But English imagination is slow to adapt itself to a new idea, and it is only gradually that we obtain evidence of the profound influence that this extending of the frontiers of knowledge was beginning to exercise. In a play written as early as 1515, entitled *The Four Elements*, the wonders and vastness of the new lands are described, with a lament that it should have been left to foreigners to have accomplished so noble an enterprise as their discovery.

None the less, the mere fact of these new lands springing, as it were, into existence, had wrought a profound change which only gradually came to be appreciated. For, by a singular reversal of the general tendency of the time, it was as if England, from being a remote island on the edge of the world, had been removed and planted in its very centre. With her wealth of harbours, she lay in a position equally convenient for the Atlantic passage or the voyage round the Cape to India, besides her nearness to the Low Countries and her ready access to the shores of the Baltic and the North Sea. It was, in fact, a position of unique geographical advantage, and just as Rome had constituted the imperial centre of the lands bordering the Mediterranean, so, it might have been predicted, if a vaster Empire were destined to arise, connected by waterways and extending over the whole world, no more probable nucleus for it could be imagined than England.

The discovery of the new world was matched in importance by another extension of man's power over nature in the invention, or more strictly speaking, the development of printing. Three factors combined to produce this result; the general adoption of paper in the fourteenth century for manuscripts and documents, the invention in Germany, or possibly in Holland, of printing machinery, and the demand created by the Renaissance for books and information of all kinds. To any cultured thinker of that time, the diffusion and cheapening of knowledge must have seemed an unalloyed blessing, and so, as far as that time was concerned, it

undoubtedly proved. The dangers of a cheap press, of the blighting of thought and the manipulation of opinion, were as yet far off in time. The first printers were scholars and essentially conservative. Aldus Manutius, the great printer and publisher of Venice, was the founder of its "New Academy". The first printed books were as much works of art and individual care as the old monkish manuscripts. Our own Caxton, who had learnt the craft while acting as Governor to the Merchant Adventurers in the Low Countries, originally introduced it into England for his own translation of a French romance.

It is impossible to read the prefaces, in beautiful prose, that this man wrote to his books, without realizing that if to us the turning out of a book from the press is the most ordinary of commercial transactions, to Caxton it was a high and holy service to his country and to mankind. He fully appreciated the power of his new art to promote national unity. A common language had been gradually evolving ever since the conquest, but even in Caxton's time much still remained to be done. "We Englishmen," he says, "be under the domination of the moon, which is never steadfast, but ever wavering, waxing in one season and waneth and decreaseth another season. And that common English that is spoken in one shire varyeth from another insomuch that in my days happened that certain merchants were in a ship in Thames for to have sailed over the sea into Zealand, and for lack of wind they turned at the Foreland and went to land for to refresh them. And one of them, named Sheffield, a mercer, came into a house and asked for meat, and especially he asked after eggs; and the good wife answered that she could speak no French, and the merchant was angry, for he also could speak no French, and would have had eggs, but she understood him not. And then at last another said that he would have 'eyren'; then the good wife said that she understood him well. Lo, what should a man in these days now write, eggs or eyren?" The printing press was to supply the answer.

It was not enough to Caxton that there should be one English, it must also be good English, worthy of the land that Caxton loved so wisely and so well. "We ought," he says, "to give a singular laud unto that noble and great philosopher, Geoffrey Chaucer . . . for to-fare that he by labour embellished, ornated and made fair our English." To give Englishmen one tongue, and that as noble and expressive as any in history, was the task that this unpretentious craftsman set before himself and the press. He was a veritable

high priest of enlightenment. The books that he gave to his countrymen were selected with the deliberate purpose of promoting "the good prosperity and policy of the commonwealth". He regrets that the one of the world's nine worthies, Arthur, who was a Briton, is celebrated more worthily abroad than at home, and with the aid of Sir Thomas Malory's beautiful prose he sets himself to remedy the lack. "Oh," he cries, in his preface to Cato, "when I remember the noble Romans, that for the common weal of the city of Rome they spent not only their movable goods but they put their bodies and lives in jeopardy and to the death . . . in my judgment it is the best book for to be taught to young children in school, and also of people of every age."

The silent revolution accomplished by printing was soon to make itself felt in the stimulus that it gave to the quick diffusion of ideas and the formation of public opinion. Men began to think more for themselves, to be less inclined to have their opinions dictated to them by authority. The desire, ministered to at first by Wycliffe, to read and judge God's word for themselves in their own tongue, was now greatly strengthened and contributed in no small degree to the growth of Protestantism.

4

The Passing of Custom

The passing of the medieval world was accompanied by a change of less obviousness but not less importance than any we have yet described. Despite the abounding life and energy of the Gothic period, it had been, in the material sphere, compared with what was to follow, a time of stability. Steady development there had been, but no revolutionary change. Stability and not progress was the aim that medieval thinkers and statesmen set before themselves. When the affairs of this life were in all seriousness believed to be of lesser importance than the prospects of a life to come, the pursuit of welfare could hardly be identified with that of wealth. In his small and centralized world, man, being in God's image, still remained in the centre of the picture. He might be, and often was, unscrupulous and whole-hearted in the pursuit of gain, but this was recognized by common consent as a sin, the deadly sin of avarice. It was to prefer the means of life to its end, to make the meat more than the life and the raiment than the body. St. Thomas Aquinas, in treating of economic questions, did not trouble about

increasing the general dividend or even about the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but he asked first of all how far the pursuit of worldly wealth was consistent with that of eternal salvation.

Here, as elsewhere, man purchased his control over nature at some sacrifice of his own dignity—a medieval doctor would have called it his soul. Unconsciously he tends to substitute material for spiritual standards, to judge of a business transaction upon business principles. This, in the long-winded terminology of our own day, is known as the secularization of economic life. Its ultimate tendency is to replace God's image by the economic man or Robot. Whether such a process has been for the good may be open to discussion, but that some such change was, humanly speaking, inevitable, is beyond doubt. For medieval Christianity envisaged a state of society that was, in its main outlines, fixed and unchanging. In that society every man had his niche—military history has never known a more independent specimen of humanity than one of the Black Prince's yeomen archers, and yet the archer would no more have dreamed of carrying a marshal's staff in his quiver than he would have of being lashed to the triangle and flogged in the good old Peninsular style. The manor was a self-contained unit, carrying on from generation to generation on a customary and not a business footing; the craft gild was another such unit, of a limited number of craftsmen doing a limited amount of work by prescribed methods and for a fair price. With such a people as the Chinese this state of things might have become one of stable equilibrium, the different classes and social units might have continued a contented but unexciting existence to this day. But it is not in the nature of Western peoples to stand still; the energy of Amiens Cathedral and the Crusades could no more be confined within such limits than a hundredweight of lighted gunpowder can be kept in a barrel.

When we talk of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as being times of economic stability we are, therefore, only using the word in a purely relative sense. For any other people than those of Western Europe they would have seemed centuries of bewildering change. Even without the discovery of America and the Renaissance, the medieval system must have broken down; it was, indeed, showing signs of breaking down as early as the Black Death. If such a poem as *Piers Plowman* is evidence of its author's love of a well-graded social hierarchy, it is evidence also of his fear that this desirable state of things is in peril from the wickedness of men. "All is lost," as Chaucer put it, "from lack of steadfastness."

And yet the fifteenth century in England must be regarded as a time of incubation rather than as one of striking or revolutionary change. The manor remained the unit of country life, the gild that of town life, without any alteration in either sufficiently marked to strike the imagination of contemporaries. The villeinage, which had been the burning grievance of Wat Tyler and his followers, almost died out of its own accord. The last remnants of feudal control were being extinguished in the towns. These no doubt beneficent changes had been accompanied by another of graver import. The bonds of spiritual union that had held both manor and gild together had been imperceptibly loosened; soon they would cease to bind. These bonds were custom and religion.

To take the manor first, it was, in its origin, as much a military as an economic unit. If the serf laboured so many days a week on his lord's demesne, the lord was at least supposed to give him leadership and protection against whatever enemies might threaten his peace, whether these took the form of Vikings, or marauding Scots, or the lords of other estates. That the lord did not become an arbitrary tyrant, rackrenting and evicting at will, was due to the extraordinary force of custom, the custom which was declared in the manor court by the general voice of the little community. There was, at first, comparatively little business done with money, though what there was was accurately settled according to custom down to the uttermost farthing. Gradually, however, the lords of manors made exactly the same discovery as the King with regard to payment by service, that it was thoroughly bad business. Just as the King had accepted "scutage" money instead of knight service, so the lords began to accept money rents in lieu of labour rents. Tentatively, no doubt, at first, Gurth would pay his penny or halfpenny when he was not wanted, on the distinct understanding that he should turn out on the demesne when he was wanted. Gradually, however, it would become the custom for Gurth to pay his few pence, year after year, until those pence and not his labour became the price of his strip in the common field. This sort of tenure was known as customary, because it was held by the custom of the manor, and it came gradually to supersede villeinage.

A powerful factor in sustaining the authority of custom was the comparative stability of the medium of exchange. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the tendency was slightly in the direction of a fall of prices. Silver, which formed the standard of value, was on the decrease in Western Europe, because its mining resources

were not sufficient to replace the drain to the East for luxuries. Hence the lord would find the value of his rents, if anything, increasing, and there would be proportionately less incentive for him to alter the status quo. The first notable disturbance of economic stability came in the visitation of the bubonic plague which, by sweeping away so large a proportion of the labourers, raised the value of labour, and, despite the efforts of the government to maintain the status quo, greatly increased its fluidity, for the villein who ran away from his lord's estate could confidently reckon on finding some other lord who would take on his services on much better terms, and who would not be inclined to give away the transaction to his fellow employer. So far the balance of advantage was on the side of the labourer, whose condition certainly tended to improve as villeinage died out.

Other forces were at work of a more questionable tendency. Foreign commerce may, as had often been pointed out, have absorbed a very small part of the nation's activities, but this part was important quite out of proportion to its magnitude. Not content with her long-standing wool export, England was beginning to work up her own cloth and push it in the markets of Europe. Between the year 1354 and the accession of Henry VIII, according to Professor Ashley, the export of English cloth multiplied itself sixteenfold.

All this created an ever-increasing home demand for English fleeces, which became particularly keen as the country began to revive, under a strong, commercial government, after the Wars of the Roses. A landlord, who wanted to run his estate on business principles, would find it profitable, by hook or by crook, to convert into pasture some of the land laid down for tillage. Not only would he be able to get a good price for his wool, but he would save heavily on his already inflated labour bill, since the land that had provided employment for a whole village could be looked after with advantage by two or three shepherds. And on business principles the estates were coming more and more to be run. The Paston letters are sufficient evidence of the spirit of sordid land and money grabbing that was rife in the most prosperous country districts. It was a sad look out for the small man if it were to become the obvious economic interest of the big one to bear hardly upon him.

The re-establishment of a strong central power still further weakened the landlord's motives for keeping the old system intact. The value of an estate no longer consisted in the number of fighting men who would follow their lord's banner. Mr. Tawney has

significantly pointed out that in Northumberland, where the necessity for fighting was still urgent, the process of enclosure was longest delayed. And not only from above was the break up of the manor hastened, but from below. In his invaluable *Agrarian Problem of the Sixteenth Century* Mr. Tawney has shown by a series of maps how far the process of laying field to field, or rather strip to strip, was being carried on, with a view to enclosure, by the peasants themselves. John, by purchase or bequest, may acquire the strip of William some distance away from his own, and then, probably for a small consideration, manages to get William's strip exchanged for that of James, which is next to his. Gradually John, or his descendants, manage to accumulate four or five adjacent strips in this way, and the block is fenced off and becomes John's Close. On some manors the many strips come to be replaced altogether by a few fields, some of which are laid down for pasture.

Meanwhile the lord has not been idle. He is perhaps tired of the worry and uncertainty of farming his own demesne, and he decides to let the greater part of it out, on lease, for a term of years to a farmer (the word now comes into use), perhaps a "slender, choleric man" like Chaucer's reeve, who has been sharp enough to put by more money than the lord himself. It will be observed that the lord now, for the first time, appears in the rôle of capitalist. He often not only leases the land but the stock to some man who cannot afford to buy it outright. The transaction thus becomes a partnership, with the lord in the rôle of sleeping partner. From his point of view the lease is a safe investment with the prospect of a fixed return, and probably a considerable enhancement of capital value on the lease falling in. If such large farms were turned from arable to pasture, it was obvious that the demand for labour would be lessened, and unemployment increased.

Unfortunately this comparatively innocent arrangement was not the lord's only resource. Flanders and distant Florence were calling out for English wool, Antwerp, and the markets she supplied, for cloth; the motive of avarice which had been the bane of the schoolmen was coming less and less to be regarded as sinful. How if the customary tenants, now called copyholders from holding by copy of the court roll of the manor, could be got rid of? The force of custom which had in the past put a check on the proudest lord, was losing its strength as religion and custom alike grew pale in the dawn of humanism. These manorial tenures might not be so valid in the light of the common, the super-manorial law, which tended to be

jealous of these inferior and rival jurisdictions. In any case the Common Law was both expensive and hopelessly complicated; a verbal slip in some recondite formula was enough to get a litigant non-suited, and what chance did the poor ignorant cottager stand of maintaining his probably shaky title against the money and skilled counsel of the protector, turned robber? One favourite device was to raise the customary "fine" on the entrance of a new tenant to a prohibitive amount. It is an obscure and sordid story, unrecorded in hundreds of little hamlets and villages, and the agony of it only reaches us faintly, as of something hardly real.

We need not think that these lords were wicked and greedy beyond the common run of men. They, too, were pushed on by forces beyond their understanding. As the sixteenth century wore on, the discovery of the new world led to an enormous increase in the circulating medium. As if this were not enough, Henry VIII and the gang of magnates that succeeded him deliberately debased the coinage. Nothing conduces so much to the break down of ancient custom as a violent change in the value of money. Only an active acceptance of Christian or humanitarian principles, such as the world has never yet seen, can keep men from endeavouring to recoup themselves in such circumstances. And never were such principles further from acceptance, in anything but name, than in the first dawn of the Renaissance.

Sir Thomas More, that sweet and penetrating critic, has sketched for us the sort of thing that must have been happening all over England and was to bequeath a heritage of misery from whose effects we still suffer. "That one covetous and insatiable cormorant and very plague of his native country may compass about and enclose many thousand acres of ground within one pale or hedge, the husbandmen be thrust out of their own, or else either by coveyne or by fraud or by violent oppression they be put besides it, or by wrongs and injuries they be so wearied, that they be compelled to sell all: by one means therefore or by other, either by hook or crook they needs must depart away, poor, silly, wretched souls, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, woeful mothers, with their young babes, and their whole household small in substance and much in number, as husbandry requireth many hands. Away they trudge, I say, out of their known and accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in. All their household stuff, which is very little worth, though it might well abide the sale, yet being suddenly thrust out they are constrained to sell it as a thing of nought. And when they

have wandered abroad till that be spent, what can they then else do but steal, and then justly pardie be hanged, or else go about a begging. And yet then also they be cast in prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not, whom no man will set a work, though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto."

Here we catch some glimpse of the origin of these two things, large-scale pauperism and the surplus labour market.

5

Capitalist Origins

We shall do well to keep in view the truth at which we have already arrived, that what we know as humanism does in practice go along with a process of dehumanization, a lowering, necessary or not, of man's dignity and importance in the scheme of things. " Glory to things in the highest," might be its message, " for things are the master of man ! " Now the medieval Christianity, which humanism superseded, subordinated everything else to the soul of the individual, God's microcosmus. It is thus that medieval industry is essentially a personal, even a spiritual affair. To produce an immense quantity of goods as cheaply and quickly as possible was not even aimed at. It was enough if the craftsman could maintain himself, without avarice and without sacrificing the eternal to the temporal, by honest work, that should be a joy to him in the making and bear the stamp of his personality afterwards. Such is the spirit of the gilds, at their best, such that of the Gothic Cathedrals.

This personal quality in the work becomes less and less compatible with the development of modern industry. Standardization is fatal to personality, and towards standardization progress ever tends. The individual product, a thought in stone or cloth or jewellery, is replaced by the type, the soulless product of machinery. Bold and fearless thinkers like Tolstoy, who are incapable of blinking facts because they lead to unworkable conclusions, have even gone to the length of wishing to scrap the whole of the machinery, visible and invisible, and returning to peasant simplicity. But the instinct for progress is in the very blood of Western Europe, and such counsel would be as likely to succeed as a command to the sun to set in the East.

The first achievement of standardization, and the one on which all the rest depends, is in the medium of exchange—though even

earlier than the medium of economic comes that of mental exchange, a standardized, though an imperfectly standardized language. The invention of printing was applied to coins centuries before anybody thought of adapting it to books. The first bargains were straightforward and entirely personal affairs, the merchant undid his corded bales of trinkets on the beach, and got in return furs from the hunter or metal from the digger; the lord gave the peasant his holding and the peasant gave the lord his service. It was an important advance when certain pieces of metal came to be acceptable for all transactions alike, when a piece of silver would be taken by the lord as rent and passed on to a man at arms for wages, and so on indefinitely. The act of exchange takes on a less personal and more businesslike tinge. The very virtue of a coin consists in its being exactly the same as all coins with the same name. Money is, in fact, abstract and transferable power over commodities, and therefore over the labour that produces them. Just as the magician can summon genii to do his bidding and supply his wants, so the millionaire can call up multitudes from the uttermost parts of the earth to gratify his whim.

Before the dawn of the Renaissance, the beginning had been made of a system that was to render the transference of power more easy, swift and impersonal than the mere bartering of goods for coin. As early as the twelfth century that already active trading city, Florence, had discovered how, by bills of exchange, a debt in one place could be transferred to another, and incidentally, how what was a direct bargain between two men could be changed into a general and impersonal obligation. The use of bank notes, or obligations on the part of the bank towards anybody who may happen to hold its paper, originates in the Venice of the fifteenth century. Credit is now beginning to supplement coin as a means of exchange.

These changes were slow to take noticeable effect in England. The Jews, whose inherited traditions and cosmopolitan outlook made them everywhere the pioneers of modern business methods, and the rings of Lombard and English financiers who supplied Edward III with money for his butchering expeditions in France and who were ruined by the failure of that somewhat equivocal hero to meet his liabilities, might be classed as usurers in the worst sense of the word, the sense in which the schoolmen used it of lending at extortionate interest for unproductive purposes. In England, at any rate, the time was not yet ripe for a credit economy.

The time was, however, approaching when industry and commerce

alike would demand the rapid and easy transference of wealth into the right hands for purposes genuinely productive, and against this, in principle, even St. Thomas Aquinas had no objection. Industry was beginning to progress beyond the limits of the craftsman working up his customers' material in the shop. Wholesale was beginning to supplement retail trade, a new sort of gild was coming into existence that had no taste of the joys of workmanship, but handled its material in bulk. Such were the grocers, whose very name implies that they dealt "in gross". Out of another of these wholesale companies, the mercers, arose the Merchant Adventurers.

It is obvious that successful business is tending to get beyond the means of the ordinary, independent man left to his own resources. It is in distribution more than production that this is at first manifest. True, we have the goldsmith who requires expensive plant, the farmer who wants to stock his farm, even the fisherman, though his ingenuity may yet possibly be equal to the making of his own boat. But as yet production waits upon invention, and the day of machinery and the factory system is in its dim beginnings. Clocks, indeed, were well known in the fourteenth century and printing came in the fifteenth. But what called most for capitalist enterprise in the fifteenth century was foreign trade, and above all, shipping.

The establishment of an English shipping interest, by the formation of the Merchant Adventurers, is, therefore, an event of far-reaching importance. To make a successful voyage, it was necessary, even thus early, to sink or invest a good deal of wealth.

The merchant who took the ship overseas and traded with the goods was seldom in a position to finance the whole venture. Another party enters into the transaction in the shape of the financier who may never have been to sea in his life, but whose command of power, through the medium of coin or credit, it is necessary to enlist before a ship can be put together or a crew engaged. Various means were adopted by which this could be arranged without the taint of usury; the earliest form of all was for the shipman to constitute himself, in theory, the agent of the financier, another was for the money to be advanced on the security of the ship and its contents, but, to quote Professor Ashley, "of all the ways of investment open to a monied man in a trading centre like London, the most attractive and most usual was that of partnership in its various forms," the only condition insisted upon by the Church and public opinion being that the investor should always share in the risk of the adventure.

To the canonist, therefore, a secure gilt-edged investment would have seemed more tainted with usury than a speculative one in industrials.

Of all forms of making money, this one of shipping adventure is the best calculated to evoke the noblest elements of the national character, it is the one most tinged with romance. The very men who capitalized the voyages were often endowed with that virtue which the Greeks knew as " magnificence ". Popular legend is here a surer guide than the actual and probable facts. Even Robin Hood has passed out of common remembrance, but not a Christmastide passes without its pantomime of Dick Whittington and his cat. Now Whittington was a real personage, of much importance in his own day, and not without his importance to the historian in ours. But the legendary Dick embodies the thoughts and aspirations of an England just beginning to take to her surrounding sea. His good fortune comes from an investment. His master, Fitzwarren, is sending a ship to trade with the Moors and, like the good fellow he is, he determines that all his servants shall have something on the venture as well as himself. Poor Dick, the household drudge, has nothing to invest but a cat, and lo, this proves so valuable to the rat-infested King of Morocco that he loads the ship with gold and jewels. The singularly honest Fitzwarren decides that the price of Dick's cat is Dick's fair share of the proceeds, and by this means the lucky boy gains the hand of Fair Alice, and is started on the path that leads to his being thrice Lord Mayor of London.

Rather more than a century after Dick Whittington there was flourishing a no less remarkable hero of romance in the shape of the great clothier John Winchcombe, better known as Jack of Newbury. If Dick was the idealized father of commercial speculation, so factory owners may look to Jack as to the patriarch of their calling. Before the end of the sixteenth century his story had been worked up by Thomas Deloney into a veritable epic of the English cloth manufacture. Jack is, no less than Dick, a historical personage, though like most epic heroes he may have gained something in the process of being written up. He is described as " a man of merry disposition and honest conversation, was wondrous well beloved of rich and poor, specially because in every place where he came, he would spend his money to the best, and was not at any time found a churl of his purse ".

This model owner naturally ran a model factory :

"Within one room both large and long
There stood two hundred looms full strong;
Two hundred men, the truth is so,
Wrought at the looms all in a row,
By every one a pretty boy
Sat making quills with mickle joy:
And in another place hard by,
Two hundred women merrily,
Were carding hard with joyful cheer,
Who singing sat with voices clear.
And in a chamber, close beside,
Two hundred maidens did abide,
In petticoats of Stammell red,
With milk-white kerchers on their head."

Jack is reported to have clothed and commanded a strong contingent of his own factory hands in the campaign of Flodden, and when the Queen gave him her "lily-white hand" to kiss at the place of assembly, to have announced, with sturdy middle-class pride, "Gentleman am I none!"

Jack is in advance of his age in his adoption of the factory system on so large a scale; the common practice, until the latter half of the eighteenth century, being for the capitalist to supply the material to independent craftsmen to be worked up for him in their own homes on a piecework basis. But he is typical of a new species of capitalist, who is coming to rival in importance the great traders like Whittington and Canynge. These men are employers and organizers of industry, sprung from the ranks of the more prosperous craft gilds that are now beginning to compete with the mercantile interest for the control of the towns, and thus to revive, in a new form, the old struggle between merchant and craft gilds. But the whole gild system was, during the sixteenth century, going to pieces, and the more important of the gilds, shedding their old religious and democratic associations, were becoming chartered monopolies of associated employers.

But the strong hand of the State was able to restrain the gilds from developing into such formidable obstacles to progress as they became, for instance, in Scotland, where the crafts were long to wage bitter war against the mercantile oligarchy, on the one hand, and the unprivileged workman on the other, and where the gilds used their monopoly as a lever for such shameless corruption and manipulation of prices that our James I felt himself constrained to denounce both merchant and craft gilds in the roundest terms. In England the gilds did certainly become as great a nuisance as any other once living social organism that has been drained of spirit into becoming a vested interest. Their influence was probably

largely responsible for the migration of industry from the towns into the country.

Slowly, advancing and receding like the tide, comes on this new order of capitalist industry, a state of things in which hoarded power, as abstract and impersonal as a mathematical symbol and as fluid as quicksilver, comes to dominate all. Thus do conquered things revenge themselves upon the conqueror Man. As yet the process had only just begun, and it required an observer of extraordinary subtlety to guess at the direction in which things were tending. Such an observer as Sir Thomas More, who clearly perceived that in the pursuit of wealth, *à outrance*, men were in danger of substituting the means for the end of life. Already, in 1516, we find him writing, " when I consider and weigh in my mind all these commonwealths which nowadays anywhere do flourish, so God help me, I can perceive nothing but a conspiracy of certain rich men, procuring their own commodities under the name and title of the commonwealth," and " what justice is this that a rich goldsmith or an usurer, or to be short any of them, which either do nothing at all, or else that which they do is such that it is not very necessary to the commonwealth, should have a pleasant and wealthy living, either by idleness or by unnecessary business: while in the mean time poor labourers, carters, ironsmiths, carpenters and ploughmen, by so great and continual toil as drawing and bearing beasts be scant able to sustain, and again so necessary toil that without it no commonwealth were able to continue and endure one year, should get so hard and poor a living and lead so wretched and miserable a life, that the state and condition of the labouring beasts may seem much better and wealthier ? " Or, to sum up the matter: " as long as there is any property, and while money is the standard of all other things, I cannot think that a nation can be governed either justly or happily; not justly, because the best things will fall to the share of the worse men; not happily, because all things will be divided among a few (and even these are not in all respects happy), the rest being left to be absolutely miserable." Here is a statement of the social problem to which not even a Marx or a Lenin could add much. And this was written in the dim dawn of capitalist industry, by a devout Catholic, a future chancellor of Henry VIII, and, strangest of all, a persecutor.

6

KINGCRAFT

The break up of the medieval order of society and the loosening of all the old traditional bonds created an urgent need of reconstruction not only in the forms but in the spirit of government. The Christian unity of Europe, under Rome, had degenerated into such unreality that when the Turk, from his base at Constantinople, was on the Danube within striking distance of Vienna, the Most Christian monarch of France was in active alliance with him against the temporal head of Christendom. The spirit of the crusades was quite cold; the Vicar of Christ on earth was but one, and that by no means the most reputable, of several Italian potentates, all bent on overreaching each other.

The ideal of Hildebrand and Innocent III, a union of Christendom centred in Rome, was, in fact, an anachronism. The struggles of the thirteenth century had drained Rome of spirituality, and the Renaissance had loosened for the time even the bonds of superstition. The unit of government and the nucleus of common sentiment was now either the city or the nation. It was therefore imperative to find some principle of national unity that should take the place of the Catholic religion, on the one hand, and feudal or local loyalties on the other. This was the task that confronted the Yorkist brothers, and their successors of the House of Tudor.

As for the Church, her claims to a rival sovereignty had been so weakened that they were more of a nuisance than a danger. Her turn would come when the temporal power had the leisure and security to deal with her. But the problem presented by a decaying feudalism was of immediate and vital urgency, though the magnates had obligingly paved the way to its solution by butchering one another almost out of existence. Of them at least, and of war in all its forms, the nation was thoroughly sickened. Never had a contest of such ferocity aroused so little interest among the general body of the people as the Wars of the Roses. The rich nation was exhausted, the proud people humiliated.

"Where be our ships, where be our swords become?" The Lancastrian experiment or rather necessity of constitutional government had proved a notorious failure at home and abroad. Parliament had been proved incompetent to cope with the magnates and had only served to weaken the King's hands against these titled pests.

All over what had once been the Western Empire the same problem was presenting itself. Across the Channel Louis XI was hammering France into nationhood by the force and fraud of a central power supported by a standing army; in Spain the sequel of formal unity was much confused fighting in the second decade of the sixteenth century, culminating in a sovereignty practically if not formally absolute; in Scotland, on the other hand, the central power was choking in the grip of feudalism; while in Italy the multiplicity of petty states and the lack of any unity at all laid that brilliant and light-bearing people at the feet of barbarian conquerors.

It was in Italy, and in Italy's intellectual centre, Florence, that the time gave birth to the man whose writings were to exercise so profound an influence over European statesmanship for centuries after his death. Nearly all of us know the name and reputation of Niccolo Machiavelli, quite all of us have heard of old Nick, who was originally not the Lord of the Lower Regions but merely Secretary to the Ten in the Republic of Florence, neither an unmitigated scoundrel nor a friend of tyranny, but a very human and not by any means consistent being, whose chief passion was a burning patriotism, and who, in his country's blackest hour and faced with a situation well-nigh desperate, fell into the error of that equal zealot, Ignatius Loyala, and was ready to justify any means that might further the cause he had at heart, the high and holy cause of Italy's freedom. Equally absurd is it to slur over the really Machiavellian parts of his writings by such foggy catch phrases as that he merely separated ethics from politics, as if one who wrote a guide for a young man starting in life, with hints on how to cheat at cards and raise the wind by blackmail, was merely divorcing ethics from pedagogy, or rather as if the fact of a man doing this made him any the less of a blackguard. The plain fact of the matter is that old Nick so loved his Italy that he would have sold his very soul for her deliverance.

Those who judge him not merely by that bitter little handbook, *The Prince*, written for the representative of that house in which Machiavelli fondly hoped and Michelangelo despaired to find the saviour of his country, wrong him much. His other writings, and particularly his Discourses on Livy, show him to have been capable of noble sentiment and of appreciating it in others. The man who can inculcate that a patriot ought to sink every private aim in his country's service is not divorcing ethics from politics, and he who points out that to found a Commonwealth is a nobler act than to found

a tyranny, is not a very consistent friend of tyrants. And those who take the popular view of Machiavelli would be surprised, we should imagine, to read the noble and profound passage in which all the misfortunes of his dear Italy are traced to the wickedness of the Popes in forsaking the religion of Christ, and following low and temporal ambitions.

But in truth, what Machiavelli actually was matters less than the impression he left upon his own and subsequent times. The mob, even if it be a regal and academic mob, ignores fine distinctions and fastens upon the obvious and striking. The Machiavelli who got across the footlights of history, was the man who wrote that naively thorough-going chapter on the art of falsehood. The Machiavellian doctrine of which Frederick the Great, who had only read "The Prince", was at once the best-known opponent and the most notorious practioner, was, in fact, founded on a generalization that Machiavelli not unplausibly made about the Italians of his own day. It is this—that men are very bad and at the same time very malleable, and that the one way to get them organized decently and successfully is by subjecting them to the will of a sovereign strong enough to make himself obeyed, and such a master of the art of government as to advance the interests and power of the State by any means, fair or foul. Just as in a later age Ricardo and his school were to create the ignoble fiction of an economic man, so Machiavellianism may be said to have created a political man, a being without a soul and actuated by no other motive than calculating and farsighted selfishness.

This was, indeed, the logical outcome of the Renaissance, which had poured the acid of its doubt over all existing beliefs, and given nothing to put in their place but the cast off garments of paganism. The conception of the nation as a moral entity, playing its dutiful part as a member of Christendom or of humanity, one perfectly familiar to the schoolmen, was a thing of the past; the men of the new age envisaged an anarchy of nations without faith and without principle, each striving ceaselessly, remorselessly, for its own aggrandisement. Where the prime need was for a sovereign capable of playing his subjects like pawns in a game, it was not likely that the claims of democracy would be much regarded. A sovereign who can instantly command all the resources of his nation is likely to have a winning advantage over one who has to wait upon the doubtful assent of people or Parliament. On the other hand a new art, the art of kingcraft, comes to be studied with as painstaking

a minuteness as that of picking pockets in the establishment of Mr. Fagin.

Such an ideal did not triumph unchallenged. The bitterest satire of Erasmus and More was launched against its godlessness and essential stupidity. But it was to dominate European politics for centuries. Cavour himself was but accomplishing successfully the high mission that Machiavelli had destined for the young Lorenzo de Medici. Never was the game of Machiavellianism played with a more shameless lack of scruple than in the Europe of the early twentieth century. Its end may not inconceivably be the suicide of civilization.

The Yorkist Kings and Henry VII were thoroughgoing products of the new school. Never were monarchs more utterly lacking in sentiment. Even the dreams of glory that had somewhat relieved the sordidness of medieval ambitions left them cold. Edward IV and Henry VII were both thoroughly conscious of the fact that their power varied in inverse proportion to the calls for money they had to make upon their Parliaments. In consequence they were among the most pacific of sovereigns. "War," writes Edmund Dudley, Henry VII's extortionate minister, "is a marvellous great consumer of treasures and riches. . . . Besides that," he adds naively, "it is very dangerous for the soul and the body."

Edward IV, once his energy and military talents had placed him in the saddle, was too lazy to do more than secure his own power and pleasures, and avoid going, more than once, upon his travels, and his brother Richard had compromised his own character too deeply in getting the throne, to have a fair chance for displaying his statesmanship while on it. The first Tudor was a man more fortunately constituted and circumstanced. He was perhaps the least fitted of all our monarchs for the part of a stage King, but it is doubtful whether any one of them can claim to have surpassed his achievement as a real one. The narrow, intent, yet humorous eyes, the tight lips, the hands that even in repose seem to be instinctively clutching, bewray the business King of a country sick to death of chivalry and chiefly anxious for quiet times under a firm government.

Henry VII was as consummate an exponent of scientific kingcraft as Machiavelli's Prince, and a far more human character. He was, in his way, a devout churchman and—contrary to the usual notion of him as a crowned skinflint—he displayed an unostentatious generosity in the relations of his daily life. Apart from one political

murder, he was merciful to an extent quite unique in that hard age. Bloodshed had no attractions for him, least of all when it took the wholesale and expensive form of war. Characteristically enough, when he got involved in a quarrel with France he did, as his biographer, Lord Bacon, tells us, " but traffic in that war to make his return in money."

If he husbanded his own resources he did the same for those of the nation. He was determined to build her prosperity not on the quicksands of military glory, but on the sure foundation of trade backed by national production. Native industry was fostered by a carefully thought out series of protective enactments which at last thoroughly realized the spirit of that episcopal pamphlet, *The Libel of English Policy*. Above all, the *liaison* with Flanders was a prime object of Henry's foreign policy, and a commercial treaty was concluded between the two countries that was known as " The Great Intercourse ". Henry did, indeed, try to go one better when the Archduke Philip of the Netherlands happened to be wrecked upon his shores, and like Harold of England, on a somewhat similar occasion, was induced to subscribe to an arrangement dictated by his host, which the indignant Flemings knew as the Bad Intercourse. However, in an age when lying was one of the ordinary accomplishments of a Prince, it was considerably easier for Philip than it had been for Harold to rescind the whole arrangement once he was out of that instinctive clutch of his host's hands.

England, with her abounding vitality and her rapidly developing cloth and shipping industries, only needed such a period of peace and scientific government to enable her to make a complete recovery from the exhaustion of foreign and civil wars, and under Henry's fosterage she became fully capable of resuming her place in the first rank of European states. His work was not unlike that of the younger Pitt in the years between the loss of American Colonies and the war with revolutionary France. He accomplished by masterly diplomacy more than the greatest of his predecessors by force of arms. By keeping the peace with France he actually made possible a defensive alliance with France's ally, Scotland, and sealed this, after the fashion of the time, by a marriage which ultimately secured the union of the two crowns. It was a risky step, for it might and in fact did mean the eventual putting of a Scottish King on the English throne, but " the greater will draw the less ", as Henry remarked with profound and prophetic insight. His grasp of essentials was equally manifest in his quick recognition of the rising power of Spain, and

his endeavours to link the interests of the two countries by the ill-starred marriage of first his eldest and then his second son with the Princess Katherine of Aragon.

7

Firm Government and the Common Law

How urgent was the need for a firm sovereignty we know from the Paston letters. An even more striking series of records is that concerning the estates of Mellor in Derbyshire, for the possession of which a vigorous private war, interspersed with litigation, was carried on through the reigns of Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VII. We read how, at one stage of the dispute, a Sir John Savage took prisoner his rival, Robert Pylkington, put him in fetters, and swore that he would never let him go until these lands were given up. On Robert proving recalcitrant one of Sir John's henchmen " brought a mess of green pottage on a Friday at noon to the dinner of the said Robert, and before he was aware, he had eaten a great part of that mess with poison put in, and at midnight the said Robert was swollen so great that he was girt about his body in four places with girdles and towels for breasting. Then the said Sir John Savage repented and said he knew no deceit done to the said Robert and said that the said Robert should have all manner of things that might do him good or pleasure and then put a cunning physician to the said Robert and he did great cures to him ". From this state of things the Common Law provided but a dubious redress; juries were indeed summoned, but such was their bias that on one occasion the judges were obliged to order their weapons to be taken away to prevent a free fight in the box.

Such were the conditions with which the ablest of all our royal houses was called upon to deal. The problem was the same as that which confronted rulers all over Europe during the sixteenth century, even to the remote Muscovy which Ivan the Terrible was to crush into unity under the weight of Tsardom. The solution arrived at, except where the forces of anarchy precluded any solution at all, was generally contained in the one word sovereignty, sovereignty as interpreted by Machiavelli's *Prince*. In France, in Spain, in most of the petty states of Italy and Germany, the fight was a straight one between despotism and anarchy, and constitutional forms gradually tended to become more formal survivals.

It is perhaps the most notable fact in English constitutional history that despite all apparent probabilities, such a transition to despotism did not take place. Modern historians no longer use the old catch phrase about Tudor despotism. Strong sovereigns as they were, and had to be, no Tudor, not even Henry VIII, made the least serious attempt to break the back of Parliamentary government. Parliament was indeed overshadowed by the power and prestige of the crown, and this for a most excellent reason, that the crown was generally able to raise enough money to carry on its own business without supplementing its resources by taxation; but Parliament not only retained, but even increased its privileges, and the Tudors were ostentatiously careful to work hand in glove with it.

The situation was appreciated with admirable lucidity before the coming of the Tudors by Sir John Fortescue, who was not only a wise and patriotic observer, but had the advantage of having been Chief Justice of the King's Bench under Henry VI, and then, thanks to his devotion to a fallen House, of studying the opposite of the English system in France. It was the contrast thus presented that led Sir John to draw the same fundamental distinction between an absolute and a constitutional monarchy that Machiavelli himself was to trace in his Discourses on Livy. That these two almost contemporary thinkers could have come so close together as regards essentials, and yet that one should be the reputed champion of despotism and the other of constitutional principles, is due to the fact in England the foundations of the constitution had been well and truly laid during the Middle Ages, and above all, as the English Chief Justice thoroughly appreciated, in England's heritage of the Common Law.

It was, indeed, a heritage that it required an Englishman and one brought up in the law to appreciate. To the logical Latin intelligence the English law must have seemed a thing fit for barbarians or madmen. "It is infinite," are the words put into the mouth of Reginal Pole, "without order or end. There is no stable ground therein nor sure stay, but everyone that can colour reason maketh a stop to the best law that is before time devised. The subtlety of one sergeant shall . . . destroy all the judgments of many wise men before time received. There is no stable ground in our common law to lean unto. The judgments of years be infinite and full of much controversy and besides that of small authority. The judges are not bounden, as I understand, to follow them . . . this

maketh judgments and process of our law to be without end and infinite, this causeth suits to be long in decision." That this was no exaggerated indictment the history of the time bears witness; the Common Law was pedantic, illogical, expensive and tedious to the last degree. And yet so penetrating a thinker as Fortescue could be eloquent in its praise, could entitle his most considerable work *The Praise of the Laws of England.*

For indeed the rapid efficiency of Roman law was fraught with more danger to a free state than all the injustice and confusion of the English system. Fortescue goes right to the heart of the matter when he singles out the Roman maxim, " what pleases the prince has the force of law," as the foundation of that " royal dominion " or absolute government to which he is opposed. Such a maxim, he points out, has no place in English jurisprudence. England is a government of the better type, a " Royal and politic dominion ", one in which the sovereign governs by laws to which his people have assented, and may, in consequence, put no imposition upon them without their consent. The spirit of the English law is contained in the maxim of St. Thomas Aquinas, in whose works Sir John is well grounded, that the King exists for the sake of the kingdom and not the kingdom for the sake of the King. The politic King looks upon the exercise of his power as a duty, and actually glories in its limitations.

Such are the principles that Sir John inculcates upon the exiled Lancastrians, in the event of their restoration, and afterwards, when all hope of that is gone, upon the reigning house. He urges them not only as the dictates of righteousness, but of ordinary commonsense. A constitutional monarchy means a happy and loyal people. He is robustly proud of the results of the English system in contrast with the absolute monarchy of France. The French, he holds, are reduced to such a state of chicken-heartedness that they have not even the pluck to pursue the good old English calling of highway robbery. Above all, the English King does not have to support his power by a mercenary and partially alien standing army. The might of England is in the stout hearts and long bows of her archers, Robin Hood's fellows, the yeomen freeholders of her countryside.

We have spoken of Fortescue's ideal government as constitutional, perhaps it would be better still to call it legal. He is not what has been called a great Parliament man, for he wants to rule out the conditions that call for a frequent summons of Parliament. The King, he maintains, ought to live of his own, and to have the means

provided for him so to do, for the labourer is worthy of his hire. His subjects, therefore, must provide him with enough permanent resources to meet all ordinary and most extraordinary charges. Only if anything too unusual to be thus provided for should arise, ought he to ask for a special levy. Sir John had seen enough of aristocratic anarchy to realize the importance of having the Crown strong, strong enough to overbear the mightiest Beaufort or Neville among his subjects. If the estates of the crown had been given or filched away, they should be resumed. The administration ought not to be in the hands of a clique of magnates, but of a Privy Council composed equally of clerics and laymen, and presided over by the King himself, who, however, must not remove any member without the consent of the majority.

Save for this last clause, the policy advocated by Sir John was substantially that put into practice by Henry VII. He did, in fact, restore the strong administration that the Normans and Plantagenets had bequeathed and that a century of weak government had allowed to lapse. This administration was centred in the Privy Council, which was, in effect, a committee of the larger Council of privileged magnates that had overshadowed the Lancastrian Kings. But Henry, like the rest of his House, took good care that his Privy Council should be thoroughly under his control by staffing it with men of ready talents and low birth, creatures dependent on himself and therefore loyal. He thoroughly grasped the principle that a King, to be independent, must live of his own, and proceeded, largely it must be said by methods of which Fortescue had expressed his disapproval, to accumulate a horde which was the envy of less thrifty Kings. It was not for nothing that Bacon, that master of Kingcraft, took Henry VII for his ideal monarch. Henry was, indeed, a consumate exponent of the Kingly art on the most approved Renaissance lines, a hard man with little sentiment and a thorough grasp of essentials.

He was by no means the disinterested enthusiast for constitutional government that Fortescue had been. Indeed there is no reason to doubt the testimony of the Spaniard Ayala that he would have liked to govern in the French way, but could not do it. Ayala might have added that Henry was too wise to try. It was the peculiar virtue of the Tudors that they had an intuitive appreciation of just what could and what could not be done. And whomsoever or whatsoever else they might remove from their path, none of them ever ventured seriously to attack the English Common Law or the English

Parliament, those twin props of our liberties—liberties at least in the concrete English and medieval sense.

What was it that imported its tremendous strength and—to use Maitland's word—*toughness* to the Common Law? Partly, we think, the fact that it stood for the best as well as the worst elements in the national character. It was disorderly and illogical, it eschewed generalization, but for all that, it started not from the abstract privilege of the sovereign but from the concrete liberties of the individual. That medieval use of the word liberty is no linguistic accident; liberty to the Englishman is not a goddess, who turns the same regard to all men alike, it is his private and individual liberty, his right, perhaps, to try the cases of his villeins, or to turn out three sheep on the common, or to keep the foreign merchant from competing with him and his gild-fellows in the retail market of his town.

Not only was the English Law thoroughly English, but by this, its most critical period, it had become a great vested interest. "What is distinctive of medieval England," says Maitland, "is not parliament, for we may everywhere see assemblies of Estates, nor trial by jury, for this was but slowly suppressed in France. But the Inns of Court and the Year Books that were read therein, we shall hardly find their like elsewhere." The first law reports date from the reign of Edward I, and from his son's time to that of Henry VIII there was a continuous series of Year Books, forming a vast mass of accumulating precedent. The most enduring of the medieval gilds was that which still survives in the Inns of Court; the long training and the semi-monastic life led by their inmates tended to create an atmosphere and solidarity that have contributed in no small measure to our having become the most lawyer-ridden nation in Europe. "The law in England," writes Erasmus, "is the high road to fame and fortune, and many peerages have risen out of that profession."

There was, however, no doubt that the Common Law stood in some danger of being tried itself and found wanting in the light of the new humanism with its bias towards the classics. Roman law had already captured France and was to make a conquest of Germany during the sixteenth century. English Common Law was shortly to be submerged in Scotland. If the country was to get itself decently governed, something was required in addition to a law that nobody, with the doubtful exception of the lawyers, understood, and whose cumbrousness and expense were a crushing handicap to poor suitors.

The Tudors, however, and particularly Henry VII, found a way of supplementing the Common Law while leaving it unimpaired as the law of England.

Englishmen have ever been distinguished for their capacity for improvising expedients, usually of the most illogical, for tiding over any seemingly impossible situation. Unfriendly critics have called it muddling through. At the close of the fifteenth century the Common Law had already accumulated such a weight of authority that it baffled the wit of man to adapt it to the requirements of the time. The obvious course would have been to scrap it and substitute some adaptation of the great code that bore the name of Justinian. To have done this would have been to engineer, with scientific thoroughness, the destruction of all in our national polity that is most characteristic, to have brought England into line with the despotic states of the Continent. The Common Law was, in fact, evaded. For a long time there had been developing by its side the equity jurisdiction of the Chancery, the idea being that it was part of the King's prerogative to find a summary remedy where the process of the Common Law proved too cumbrous to secure justice. The principle was similar to that of the Roman Law of Nature, that above all human and national laws there are certain principles of justice and fair play common to mankind. There was also the medieval and Christian idea of the King being the protector of the poor and oppressed. The original Chancery jurisdiction was really conducted in this spirit, cases of the most trivial sort being often settled before it, but even thus early Parliament was suspicious of such arbitrary extension of the prerogative. Gradually Chancery got to be a court with a narrowly defined sphere of action and a law of its own which, far from being simple and summary, became proverbial for its delays and unintelligibility. But in the time of Henry VII it still retained its functions as a supplement and corrective to the Common Law, and the days of Lord Eldon and Bleak House were as yet far off.

The Tudor age was also notable for the extent to which Common Law was supplemented by Prerogative Jurisdiction. The name of the Star Chamber has come to be associated with nothing but arbitrary tyranny, but in truth this Court, with its humbler sister, the Court of Requests, was the poor man's only protection against a tyranny from which the Common Law offered scant redress. Consisting, as it did, of the King's ministers, the Star Chamber was too strong for justice to be denied and too rapid in its procedure for it to be delayed.

It had this further advantage, that it gave an opportunity for the principles of scientific Roman jurisprudence to find a lodgment without subverting the Common Law, for the principle of Prerogative Jurisdiction is Roman and not English, and procedure, especially during the Renaissance, tended to adapt itself accordingly.

Just as the Tudor genius found a means of evading the Common Law without destroying it, so did it contrive to establish a firm sovereignty without impairing any of the privileges of Parliament, and even while maintaining and confirming them. If we can imagine Henry VII expounding, perhaps to his heir, the principles of kingly success, we might put some such words as these into his mouth: "The King thrives best who has money in his purse. Let therefore your expenses be as small as possible, and above all, keep out of war, since that involves great expense for very poor returns. You will then be under no necessity of asking for taxes. You will find many means of raising money by fleecing the rich, who have no friends except each other, and it is your business to keep on finding out such sources of income. Mother Church happens to be notoriously rich . . . . . It is when you come to subsidies that your troubles will begin. Cherish and humour Parliaments, they are your natural allies against over-mighty subjects, and it is ever an easier matter to get the grant of a subsidy than to get that subsidy collected from the taxpayers. But remember that Parliament becomes dangerous when, and only when, your income ceases to balance your expenses."

Henry VII had, in fact, comparatively little difference with his Parliaments because he so perfectly understood these principles, and preferred to raise money by the various more or less crooked expedients so well understood by his ministers, Empson and Dudley, rather than demand frequent taxation. Even he received a sharp reminder that Parliamentary power was not dead but sleeping when he asked for the admittedly customary aid on his daughter's marriage, and put in a claim, characteristically enough, for a considerably larger sum than he had the least intention of giving her. It was then that Thomas More, a beardless youth, talked round his fellow members into reducing the grant to a more reasonable amount, an act which was not forgotten by his Majesty, who shortly afterwards found excuse for clapping More's father into the Tower, and charging him a hundred pounds for his release.

But such incidents were as exceptional as More himself. The King's real difficulty was to collect the tax which Parliament had

granted, and an attempt to do so was usually the signal for a rebellion somewhere or another. The manuscripts at Newburgh Priory shed a good deal of light on the state of things that existed. In 1496 we read of " great trouble in the land ", for " straightness of divers gelds ", and how " the Commons of Devonshire and Cornwall rose in great hosts against the King ". In the next year " the aids and gelds were gedured that were laid afore that time for the King's great need in his wars ". In 1489, an attempt to collect a tax had led to a rebellion of rustics in Northumberland under one John a Chambre, which had to be put down by the Earl of Surrey. Even when a tax was collected somehow, it was wont to produce the merest moiety of the sum granted by Parliament. The contest was, in fact, not so much whether King or Parliament should be sovereign, as whether the King, with the aid of Parliament, could succeed in making any sort of sovereignty effective over the whole nation.

8

A Spirited Policy

The first Tudor ended his reign, a worn-out old man of fifty-three, with the sovereignty of his house fairly established, his Kingdom on the flood-tide of prosperity and his magnates thinned or fined into submission. He bequeathed what was then a more than kingly fortune to his son and successor, Henry VIII. This new King seemed destined to realize, in England, the full glory of the Renaissance. So at least it appeared to the intelligentsia of the time, and particularly to Erasmus, who looked for the dawn of a new golden age under his auspices. He was all the more brilliant in contrast to his thrifty and utilitarian father. Handsome in his person and genial in his manner, a scholar and a linguist, a sportsman, a poet, a theologian worthy to be styled the defender of the faith, a lover and composer of music, and, as it subsequently proved, an incomparable man of business and affairs, he might well have seemed destined to play the same part in England as Lorenzo de Medici in Florence.

" The world," writes Erasmus, " is waking out of a long, deep sleep. The old ignorance is still defended with tooth and claw, but we have kings and nobles on our side. . . . Where in school or monastery will you find so many distinguished and accomplished men as at your English court ? Shame on us all ! The tables of

priests and divines run with wine and echo with drunken noise and scurrilous jest, while in princes' halls is heard only grave and modest conversation on points of morals or knowledge. Your King leads the rest by his example. In ordinary accomplishments he is above most and inferior to none. Where will you find a man so acute, so copious, so soundly judging or so dignified in word and manner. . . . Who will say now that learning makes Kings effeminate? Where is a finer soldier than your Henry VIII, where a sounder legislator? Who is keener in council, who a stricter administrator, who more careful in choosing his ministers or more anxious for the peace of the world? That King of yours may bring back the golden age!" [1]

There was at least some plausibility in Erasmus's words to Henry himself, words which, according to no less an authority than Froude, will be the final verdict of history: "The intelligence of your country will preserve the memory of your virtues, and scholars will tell how a King once reigned there who revived in his own person the virtues of the ancient heroes." [2]

Seldom, indeed, has the character of its sovereign been of more decisive effect on the destinies of his people than that of Henry VIII. To the end of time it will probably remain a subject of dispute, and estimates will vary, according to the temperament of the critic, between the extremes of the crowned Bluebeard and the patriot hero and liberator of his country. Such crude verdicts of passion are not likely to do justice to a character so many-sided and of such subtle contrasts. Holbein has given the best of his genius to Henry's face, and it is not the face of a wicked man, like Crookback, nor of a human icicle, like Henry's own father; there is a pathetic earnestness, that seems to crave for sympathy, in its regard. There is also—always an ominous sign—a complete absence of humour (an utterly different thing from mere heartiness). He was a solemn and conscientious egotist, a state of character which, when it is allied to great ability, produces either splendid or terrible results. From his earliest boyhood, Henry had been encouraged to take himself with deadly seriousness; he occupied many of the greatest offices in the Kingdom before he was out of his cradle, and at the age of nine we catch a delightful glimpse of him entertaining Erasmus at Eltham, and quite disconcerting that paragon of learning by challenging him gravely to a trial of poetic skill.

[1] Froude, *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, p. 244.
[2] Ib., p. 246.

As a young man he was of a singularly frank and charming disposition and was loved by most of those with whom he came in contact. But, if we understand him aright, his early experiences as a monarch tended to sour and embitter his already self-centred nature. He was launched upon the full tide of Machiavellian Kingcraft, pitted against men of the subtlest cunning and absolute faithlessness. He appears to have been of a naturally open and trusting nature, and not without a tinge of idealism. He was the one sovereign in Europe to take the Pope seriously as the father of Christendom; a Holy League had in his eyes something of real holiness, something in the nature of a crusade. An ally was a friend to be trusted loyally, even when that ally was such a fox as Ferdinand of Spain. Henry was soon undeceived. Ferdinand's only idea was to use his too confiding son-in-law as a catspaw, and then, having diverted an English army from its object of conquering Guienne to act as a flank guard for his own attack on Navarre, to leave him, shamelessly and secretly, in the lurch. Henry's comment was characteristic; there was no faith left in the world except in himself, and therefore God would prosper him.

He had now fortified his egotism by a deep distrust of his fellow men and a serene confidence in his own righteousness. This confidence never left him, and there can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who has followed his life and correspondence that he was simply and sincerely, in all his actions, convinced of being in the right. There was no faith in the world except in himself, and he was increasingly suspicious of unfaith in others, resenting it with savage vindictiveness. It was with a clear conscience that he put on yellow clothes to celebrate the chance that rid him of his first Catherine, and took steps for hurrying on a third marriage on the day he beheaded his "sweet sweeting". It was with all the innocence of moral earnestness that, in addressing his last Parliament, he animadverted upon the lack of Christian charity among his subjects. If we were to adopt the jargon of the latest psychology, we should say that his temperament was Narcissist, that the affections that should have naturally expanded in an increasing circle remained fastened on himself like those of a little child.[1] This view gains confirmation from the extremity of nervous resentment to which he was provoked whenever his will

[1] Whatever non-propagandist doctors may ultimately decide about Henry's physical symptoms, it is at least unnecessary for us to diagnose venereal disease as the explanation of his later career. During the fifteen-thirties he was at the height of his powers, a tireless worker and consummate master of Kingcraft. Egomania is a disease of the mind, and power a more likely stimulant of it than any bacillus.

was crossed. " He shall wear it on his shoulders " was his characteristic reaction to the news that the Pope had tried to embarrass him by offering a Cardinal's hat to the saintly but uncompromising Bishop Fisher.

In the first years of his reign he showed a distinct reaction against that Tudor system of government of which he was to become an exponent. He had ideas of a spirited policy and of reviving the glories of the Black Prince and Harry of Monmouth, which were the reverse of the ambition of his more worldly-wise father. Like the splendid young man Henry VIII was, he was more inclined for the trappings than the business of government, especially as he found a minister, in Thomas Wolsey, with an inexhaustible capacity for administrative detail. Glory he did certainly, in a measure, obtain ; a French army ran away before Terouanne and a naval hero was discovered in young Lord Edward Howard, who perished in a Nelsonian attempt to cut out the French fleet off Brest. Such empty glories were dearly purchased by the shattering of his father's Scottish alliance and the revival of the old Franco-Scottish combination, though thanks to the spirit of Queen Katherine and a daring flank march by the Earl of Surrey, the Scottish King, who had played the inevitable move of invading England during Henry's advance in France, was butchered with the flower of his army at Flodden Field.

As soon as it became apparent that the conquest of France was about as likely an event as the conquest of the moon, Henry, or rather the all-powerful Wolsey, now a Cardinal, conceived the plausible idea of profiting by the rivalry of France with the great Spanish and Imperial power of Charles V. A period ensued of intense interest to the diplomatic historian, of endless Machivellian intrigue and counter-intrigue conducted, on Wolsey's part, with consummate, if unprofitable finesse. The result of it all was that Henry not only spent the whole of his father's legacy, but came to his Parliament asking for more, and found the inevitable trouble. Not only did Wolsey sustain a nasty rebuff at the hands of Parliament, but the London mob, which in those days of imperfect communications was long to stand in the forefront of English democracy, surged round the House, at the rumour that four shillings in the pound was being granted, calling on the members to go home. The country was seething with discontent. In one village we hear of a certain Peter Wylkinson roundly declaring that he would take Harry with the crown and pull him down, and this seems to be a fair sample of the kind of thing that was being said. Nor was the discontent confined

to tavern gossip. The Welsh historian, Ellis Griffith, gives an amusing account of what might have been a serious rebellion, had it not been nipped in the bud by the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk and their retainers. Altogether ten thousand fighting men had assembled at Lavenham on the border of Essex and Suffolk, and though one Duke wanted to attack and destroy them, the other was for less heroic measures, from a shrewd suspicion that his own retainers were on the side of the rebels. After a noisy conference, the Dukes bade the men's delegates retire and press their heads together, whereupon, as so often happens, a moderate section was all for peace and surrender, while the extremists went off to sound the tocsin to rouse the town, not knowing that some wily burgess had caused the clappers to be taken out of the bells. While the extremists were going about setting the town in an uproar, the men outside, hearing no bells, thought themselves deserted and sought pardon in their shirts. This ended the rebellion, but not without giving us a brief glimpse of what, even in those days, a spirited foreign policy implied. For the spokesmen of this abortive rising was a poor weaver, who put the case so tellingly to the Dukes that Sir Humphrey Wingfield, who was present, remarked that four of the ablest lawyers in the Kingdom after a week's consultation could not have made such an answer.

"Wherefore and against whom," demanded his Grace of Norfolk, "are ye intending to go?" This unknown champion of the people answered that they wanted to go to the King and complain to him of the Cardinal on account of the taxes which he set men one day after another to demand of them, and which they had not the wherewithal to pay. On being asked the name of their captain, he replied that they had no captain but poverty, and not even those grim nobles could find anything amiss with the answer. It is pleasant to record that the good-natured Cardinal was great enough to let the poor fellows out of prison and send them home with a handsome present.

Wolsey's spirited policy turned out a complete failure. He put his money on the wrong horse, and backed the already too powerful Emperor whose capture of the French King at Pavia upset the balance of power and reduced the value of England's alliance to a cipher. His own hopes of becoming Pope had proved as vain as Henry's of becoming Emperor. Henry VII's heritage, both of money and prestige, was exhausted, and, worst of all, the Pope, on whose good offices Henry was to be dependent for the divorce of his wife, was an abject tool in the hands of Henry's father-in-law.

CHAPTER II

THE REFORMATION

1

The Sands Run Out

When the Church, instead of capturing the Lollard enthusiasm for her own revival, more or less succeeded in burning it out, she had won a victory more fatal, in the long run, than any defeat could have been. It was a sign that the creative energy of her Gothic prime, the genius that had inspired her to find the correct reply to every fresh riddle of the Sphinx, was, for the time, in abeyance. During the greater part of the fifteenth century the Church of Christ in England, though outwardly never more powerful and secure, was a gigantic vested interest, buttressed less by faith than by habit and an uncritical acceptance of whatever magical sanctions she chose to claim. The testimony of every record of the time that has come down to us confirms that of the perpendicular churches to the essential worldliness of the age.

Here, more than in any other part of our history, we must beware of unqualified generalization. For the historian, as he draws nigh the Reformation, must experience some of the feelings of Christian in the Valley of the Shadow, groping his way along the razor path between the bog and the ditch, or, to put it more exactly, between the rival propaganda of Giant Pope and Giant Protestant. And the habit of constantly putting a case instead of telling a story has had the effect of presenting everything in violent primary colours, without any half tones of delicacy of shading, of turning the drama into a melodrama in which most of the prominent personalities, even when they are corporate personalities, like a Church or a monastic order, are either heroes or villains.

Thus when we talk of the decline of the Church in the fifteenth century, it behoves us to be quite clear as to what that decline really consisted in. There is certainly no evidence of any sensational wickedness on a large scale. The heads of the Church, the bishops and the abbots of the larger monasteries, appear for the most part

to have been dignified and respectable folk, who, if they did not very conspicuously adorn their positions, at least seldom conspicuously disgraced them. To all outward appearance the Church was carrying on her functions with success and even with splendour. The improvement, adornment and enrichment of her buildings showed no signs of diminishing, and over most departments of life her influence was, to all seeming, paramount. Hospitals and schools and charities, pilgrimages and mystery plays, even the rivalry of bell-ringing between parish and parish, with its necessary competition in providing the bells and the towers to hold the bells—all these things, not to speak of the religious phraseology with which the veriest worldlings and business men on the make interlarded their correspondence, might be taken as pointing to a golden rather than a declining age of ecclesiastical activity.

The Church of England was, indeed, as splendid and respectable in the days of Edward IV as that of Jerusalem under the governorship of Pontius Pilate. She was lacking in nothing except the one thing needful, that impelling force of creative genius that Bergson has called the "*élan vital*", and Saint Paul knew as the Spirit. She has ceased to produce either great Churchmen or great ideas—we cannot conceive of a Grosseteste or an Abbot Sampson or even a Becket breathing in that atmosphere. The one saintly character of the time was poor, feeble-minded Henry VI, and how much pity or respect his saintliness commanded we know. The succession of English mystics had come to an end with Lady Julian—it was not that sort of quest that appealed to contemporaries of the Pastons. Instead of encouraging new ideas, the Church was positively afraid of them; her most original thinker of this time, Bishop Pecock, who wrote a spirited defence of her against the Lollards, so far from being thanked for his pains found himself in imminent danger of being burnt for heresy. It is not surprising that under these circumstances the Universities should have sunk into a condition of intellectual stagnation, treading the dreary round of scholastic theology as a matter of formal routine.

The Church certainly did produce several men of distinguished ability, but their talents were of a kind less suited to the service of God than that of Caesar. It is notable that the most influential treatise ascribed to an English Churchman of this time is the *Libel of English Policy*, the work, it is believed, of Adam de Moleyns, Bishop of Chichester, who was murdered by some sailors who suspected him of embezzling their wages. But we look as vainly for

doctors and theologians as we do for saints. Even the monkish historians, to whom we owe so much of our knowledge of the Middle Ages, are ceasing to function—the fifteenth century is incomparably less well served by its chroniclers than its two predecessors.

The Church was, in fact, living on her past, and at the same time retaining wealth and privileges that could only be justified so long as she was fulfilling the high function assigned her by such Popes as Hildebrand and Innocent III, that of the spiritual leadership of civilization. Privilege without function is the almost certain forerunner of revolution, and no human hive will undertake the permanent maintenance of drones. Practical men—and the men of the fifteenth century were very practical indeed—cannot fail to have asked themselves whether it was really necessary for a steady trickle of English wealth to drip into the coffers of the petty and often disreputable Italian politicians who claimed to be the vicars of Christ on earth. When the crying evil of the country was disorder and lawlessness, it was at least a questionable benefit that certain religious communities should be allowed to harbour nests of criminals and even traitors that the law could not touch, and who could sally forth at any convenient opportunity. In the second half of the century we have record of no less than three raids on London by the sanctuary men of Saint Martin's le Grand, and neither the citizens nor the King himself could get a remedy.

Again the petty privileges claimed by the ecclesiastical courts were another perpetual source of irritation, and the archdeacons and summoners who were responsible for this side of the Church's activities were so generally detested that " as damned as an archdeacon " was a proverb. This irritation was brought to a head in 1514, when a London Merchant called Hunne, who had resisted a claim of the Church for one of the sheets of his wife's deathbed, was found hanged in the Bishop of London's prison, murdered, so the jury found at the inquest, by the Bishop's own Chancellor. Whether this sensational story was true—and it is certainly not proven—matters less to us than the admitted fact that it was as impossible then to get a London jury to bring in a verdict favourable to the Church as it used to be to get an Irishman convicted by twelve of his own countrymen for murdering his landlord. It must have been evident what would be the result if a popular King were to start the hue and cry after ecclesiastical wealth and privilege.

If the canker of worldliness had so gravely impaired the efficiency of the Church's episcopal and parochial organization, the results

were still more serious in her permanent garrisons throughout the country, the monasteries and nunneries. Here again there is no need to look for any sensational scandals, though if we are to judge by Archbishop Morton's report on the great abbey of Saint Albans and Bishop Nicke's on religious houses in his diocese of Norwich, there must have been some pretty bad cases. But even if we give the monasteries the benefit of any doubt there may be, and allow them to have carried on an averagely respectable routine, this would not alter the fact that they were ceasing to fulfil the purpose for which they were created, and that they were tending more and more to become privileged anachronisms. The monastic rules, and those of the friars, were framed on the supposition that those who entered the orders were impelled by a high and holy enthusiasm to forsake the world and devote themselves to the service of Christ. But when enthusiasm got out of fashion, as it did during the fifteenth century, and the average monk was inspired by no higher motive than the desire of a comfortable and sheltered profession, the rules must have seemed intolerably tedious, vexatious and pedantic, and it needs very little knowledge of human nature to divine that Chaucer's monk, who frankly set aside the rule of Saint Benedict as impracticable, must have had many successors in the ensuing century. It was a grim joke when Henry VIII, by way of giving a final turn of the screw to the unhappy monks, blandly insisted that their own rules should be observed without any sort of qualification.

At the same time, we must bear in mind that the hatred of the monasteries, which produced more than one bloody revolt in the fourteenth century, is decidedly less *en evidence* in the fifteenth, though an intermittent fire of satire shows that it was still alive. Even if they would, it was not possible for the monasteries, in the increasingly difficult times that were coming upon them, to be such active tyrants as in the days when the floor of the Abbot's parlour at St. Albans was paved with the mill-stones of the townsmen. The habit of endowing monasteries, once so prevalent, had practically ceased; labour was becoming dear, and the abbots were at last finding themselves in the old predicament of the crusading magnates, that of selling charters of privileges for cash down. Thus the hand of the monastery would, as a rule, press somewhat less heavily on the neighbouring town at the end of the century than at the beginning.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century a change was taking place that could not fail to have a disastrous effect on monastic prosperity. The effect of the discovery of America was to flood

Europe with a new supply of precious metals, and thus to decrease the value of money. Now the monasteries, which for a long time previously had found it hard enough to make both ends meet, whose income was fixed by custom, and which had no fresh endowments coming in, began to find their resources wholly insufficient to their needs, and in spite of their great wealth in plate and jewellery, were declining steadily towards the abyss of bankruptcy. It is no wonder that we hear of attempts to realize their wealth by such sacrilegious expedients as abstracting jewels from shrines, or such wasteful ones as the wholesale cutting down of timber. In numbers, too, the monks had long been declining. The monasteries no longer attracted the best class of recruit, and there was at last a temptation to keep them understaffed, in order that there might be fewer shareholders in the concern among whom to divide its dwindling income. The blocked fireplace and blocked oven at Fountains tell their own tale. It is obvious, too, that the monks were no longer, with their diminishing resources, able, even if they would, to cope with the ever increasing problem of providing for the pauper surplus of the population. It is evident that before the dissolution of the monasteries, the enormous armies of beggars had got completely out of hand, and in 1530 the first of a series of savage vagrancy laws showed that the system of indiscriminate doles was no longer a workable alternative to State action.

The monasteries constituted the weakest, as the parish organization the strongest side of the Church's system during the fifteenth century. The impression that we get is that, without being grossly wicked or tyrannous, she was gradually losing her capacity for spiritual leadership, and that, while her power to the outward eye was never more assured, the foundations of reverence and faith on which it reposed were so honeycombed with worldliness, that if it were once mooted as a business proposition that she might be relieved of her superfluous wealth, or, as a measure of patriotic expediency, brought under control of the State, she might find no very effective reply.

Had the attack upon the Church come under Lancastrian or Yorkist auspices, the story would have been one of continuous decline culminating in disaster. But the actual course of events is not quite so simple. When, in the fourth decade of the sixteenth century the storm did actually break, the Church showed that she could still produce saints and martyrs. Never during any age was she graced by two nobler figures than those of Fisher and More; never did sons of hers display the beauty of Christian heroism more

indubitably than the three martyred priors of the Charterhouse and their equally constant brethren. That such men could under any circumstances have arisen from among the worldlings of the mid-fifteenth century will hardly be believed by anyone acquainted with the records of that time.

The coming of the Tudor dynasty had, in fact, coincided with a partial but none the less genuine revival within the Church's fold. The new learning had not failed to open the eyes of a few enlightened men to the corruption and spiritual apathy that were everywhere rife, and to the need for a thoroughly drastic reform. The little band of scholars at the beginning of the new century, who enjoyed the friendship of Erasmus, seemed capable of doing for the Church of those days what the Cluniac revival and the institution of the friars had effected in former crises of her career. It remained, however, to be seen how the Church would react to the stimulus, whether she would take fire from the spark or, like a saturated bonfire, put it out.

The two dominating English personalities of this movement, John Colet and Thomas More, were both sprung from that flourishing middle class that was no less adventurous in thought than in business, and from which the ranks of the Protestant reformers were soon to be recruited. Colet, who from being an Oxford lecturer became Dean of Saint Paul's, was of a type not common in the Renaissance, a thorough-going ascetic. Though education, in the widest sense, was the master passion of his life, and though he sought the fountain of knowledge in Italy, his scholarship was not to be compared with that of his friend Erasmus, and he has left nothing behind of outstanding literary merit. It was by sheer force of personality that he influenced his age; he went about London and Oxford and Canterbury with the same uncompromising determination as Bunyan's pilgrims amid the booths of Vanity Fair to purchase the truth, and nothing less.

In this quest, though a loyal Churchman to his death, he went even further than the subsequent Protestant reformers, who appealed from the doctrine of the Church to the letter of Scripture. For not even the Bible itself was too sacred for intelligent criticism. Anticipating the critics of a much later age, Colet was actually bold enough to suggest that the story of the creation, and of Adam and Eve, was not literal fact at all, but poetry. In the New Testament Colet was equally determined to cut himself free from the shackles of formalism. He turned his attention to Saint Paul, and the Apostle's teaching

took on a new vitality—by no means congenial to the prudent ecclesiastics whose dearest wish was to let sleeping dogs and dogmas lie.

Colet's enthusiasm for the truth was not confined to criticism. He devoted no small part of his own considerable fortune to establishing a model school within the precincts of his own Saint Paul's, a school in which the formation of character and the cultivation of piety were even more of an object than the knowledge of the classics, important as this was. For unlike the great scholars of Italy, Colet never dreamed of allowing the culture of Greece and Rome an equal place in his esteem with the faith of Christ.

It was from the pulpit of Saint Paul's that Colet, in 1512, preached a sermon of unprecedented boldness to the Bishops and clergy of the province of Canterbury, assembled in Convocation for the congenial object of extirpating heresy. But Colet, with his ascetic ardour and the almost childlike sincerity that lifted him above considerations of prudence, had a very different object in view. In a burning Philippic, which was all the more effective from the humility of its presentation, he fairly lashed the covetousness, the corruption, and the worldliness which were bringing the Church into disrepute and peril, and with the passion of a loyal Churchman, he made a burning appeal for reform.

" If by chance I should seem to have gone too far in this sermon—if I have said anything with too much warmth—forgive it me, and pardon a man speaking out of zeal, a man sorrowing for the ruin of the Church . . . consider the miserable state and condition of the Church, and bend your whole minds to its reformation. Suffer not, fathers, suffer not this so illustrious an assembly to break up without result." [1]

But Colet was preaching to men incapable of appreciating the danger and, for the most part, more eager to turn on the reformer than to practise reform. Colet's own Bishop, Fitzjames, in whose prison poor Hunne had already met his end, was one of the stern old school whose only idea was to silence criticism by persecuting the critics. He and two prelates of like mind brought an accusation of heresy against Colet, who might have shared the fate of Pecock had not the Archbishop of Canterbury, Warham, happened himself to be not unsympathetic with the reforming party.

Colet's ideas of reform were on straightforward and almost obvious lines—to give back to the Church her primitive enthusiasm and

[1] From Seebohm's *Oxford Reformers*.

simplicity. But More in his *Utopia*, which was written three years after Colet's sermon, was original and creative beyond any thinker of his time. He, in fact, visualized civilization both as it was and as it might be; his first book is a merciless analysis of the selfishness, waste and muddle of the professedly Christian politics of contemporary Europe, the second, the real Utopia, is a description of what life might be like if human affairs were taken in hand and ordered sanely and scientifically. The plan of More's romance does not allow him to have resource to the Catholic Church for the functions of spiritual direction and mind-training, and he is therefore compelled to organize his earthly paradise on principles of humanitarian rationalism strangely similar to those propounded later in the century by the Emperor Akbar of Northern India. For Akbar's Din Ilahi, or voluntary union of all faiths and creeds in the service of mankind is, in its essence, the same arrangement as that which obtains in More's *Utopia*.

But Akbar's plan was made for translation into practical politics, whereas the weakness of More was that he never attempted to build any bridge between the world he lived in and the world of his dreams. More, the visionary, could see plainly the dangers that were threatening human society with the passing of the medieval ideal of the Christian commonwealth of nations. He saw Western civilization drifting towards a suicidal anarchy of independent states conducted by Machiavellian sovereigns on Machiavellian principles; he saw that the egoistic anarchy of capitalist production without any control of distribution or any basis of moral principle was leading to enormous social evils; finally, that a state of society is conceivable in which man is the master and not the slave of his destiny. The tragedy of Sir Thomas More is that he had no faith in his own vision, that instead of staking everything on a heroic attempt to build Utopia in England's pleasant land, he elected, when power came to him, to be a commonplace, reactionary politician. There is nothing in history more sickening that Sir Thomas's own complacent account of how he, the apostle of humanity and unqualified toleration, had a wretched lunatic, guilty of unorthodox ravings, bound to a tree where "they stripped him with rods till he wared weary, and somewhat longer", or declaring that the burning alive of men heroic enough to die for their unorthodox opinions is "lawful, necessary, and well done".

The opening years of Henry VIII's reign saw the Church at the parting of the ways. Would the reforming party be strong enough

to give her back her primitive enthusiasm, to purge her abuses, and to fit her for her function of guiding and controlling the new civilization? The supreme opportunity had evidently come when practically the whole power in both Church and State was concentrated in the hands of Wolsey, who, besides being the King's all powerful minister, succeeded in becoming the Pope's plenipotentiary or legate. Now Wolsey, though at heart an opportunist, was thoroughly alive to the necessity of reform, and was prepared to use his legatine powers to bring the Church up to date. He proposed to apply the pruning knife to the monasteries by the abolition of a number of small and bankrupt communities and the diversion of the proceeds to education, and he started this process with the endowment of his own foundations at Oxford and Ipswich. Wolsey was fully alive to the truth that education is the basis of reform, and he would have had the Churchmen in the van of the new learning as they had been in that of the old scholasticism.

Had Wolsey been able to devote his whole attention to the subject, it is conceivable that he might have carried through such a bold and comprehensive scheme of reform as would have given the Catholic Church a new lease of life in England. As it is, we can only conjecture what his final policy would have been. Colet and More had both, from their different standpoints, deplored the unchristian chauvinism that expressed itself in a desire for a brilliant foreign policy—Colet had actually withstood the King to his face on this subject. While the last sands were running out for Catholicism in England, while the trumpet of revolt was already being sounded in Germany, the man who alone could have saved the situation was wasting precious treasure and yet more precious time in an unnecessary and unsuccessful attempt to hold the balance of European power. As it was, when the accident of the King's divorce made the catastrophe and Wolsey's fall inevitable, the Church, with her monasteries unreformed and her abuses unchecked, was left to face an alliance between the affronted egotist on the throne, and the middle class, who had long been indignant at the Church's privileges and who were already beginning to be infected with the virus of heresy.

2

The Protestant Ideal

If the Roman power was undermined in England, in Germany it was already fighting for its life. A coarse-grained and foul-mouthed but terribly sincere champion of revolt had arisen in Martin Luther,

a man stout enough to beard the Emperor himself, no less than to incite the German Princes to massacre without ruth the hapless peasants whom their oppression had stung into rising. Luther was neither a consistent nor a subtle thinker; his strength was in his will. About the miracle of bread and wine he was as obstinately conservative as any Pope: "*Hoc est corpus meum*" he chalked on the table at the Wartburg, and from that position no argument could move him. But the revolution he brought about arose from his central doctrine of justification, and from this, willed he, nilled he, the logical consequences he deprecated were bound to follow.

The effect of Luther's teaching was to substitute a new theory of the human mind for the one previously in vogue. The psychology of Roman Catholicism is in many respects more subtle than that towards which Luther directed the Reformation. The great centralized discipline of Rome had no place for such thin lines as that between the Saints and the damned. She offered salvation indeed, and without her sacraments and beliefs salvation was impossible, but it was no sudden and startling transition from death to life. Conversion was an event in spiritual progress of whose importance she was fully aware, she was capable of making the utmost use of spiritual excitement; but these were only means to an end and not the attainment of the end itself. It is necessary for a soldier, when he joins the army, to take the oath of allegiance, but the mere taking of the oath does not make a soldier of him. That is a matter of long and arduous discipline, of habits gradually formed, of constant obedience to orders. So in the Church, the Christian was never able to talk of his salvation as something already accomplished:—

> "The bells of Hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
> For you but not for me."

Not for a moment was the discipline of Rome relaxed; at the last second the Christian might fall into mortal sin. Nor was it merely enough to be converted and repent inwardly; inward feeling, the Church held, must find expression in outward deeds. The broken heart and fount of tears were good in themselves, but the penance must be duly performed if absolution was to be obtained. It is entirely characteristic of Rome that she carried her system into the next world, and planted the Mount of Purgatory between Hell and Heaven.

The danger of this system is obvious enough to him who only studies its theory, and it must have been glaringly obvious to anyone who studied its practice in the early sixteenth century. The theory

that inward feelings must find expression, if they are genuine, in acts, might easily come to mean that acts are the only things that count, the only things, in fact, necessary to salvation. And in a cold age, these outward acts tend to lose all their connection with inner feeling, to become, on the worshipper's part, purely formal, and from the standpoint of the Church an easy way of asserting her power and raising the wind. Just as feudal services had been gradually commuted for money, so even the good works that the Church held necessary for salvation could be commuted for cash down; not a penny fell into the box without the fact being recorded in heaven, and an entry made to the credit of the donor in the Book of Life. So cynical had the Popes become, that when the notorious Tetzel went about selling indulgences, one of the few sins too monstrous to be compounded was that of buying alum from the Turk, and thereby infringing the monopoly of His Holiness's mines.

Martin Luther, who like Colet had made a close study of St. Paul's epistles, and particularly that to the Galatians, propounded a theory directly subversive to this Roman psychology, and one that has constituted the basis of Protestantism ever since. "Christians," says he, "are not made righteous in doing righteous things, but being now made righteous by faith in Christ, they do righteous things." The difference, though trivial at first sight, is fundamental. The only thing that matters about a man, according to this theory, consists in what he is, and not in what he does. If the heart is right, the good works will follow of themselves, but not all the good works of a lifetime will avail to sanctify the heart:—

> "Not the labours of my hands
> Could fulfil Thy law's commands."

A not strictly logical, but practical consequence of this theory was to make the spiritual life a thing of sharp and violent contrasts. Purgatory was abolished, penance was no longer a sacrament, you were either in a state of grace or you were damned outright—the Protestant theory did not admit of gradations. What Plato had been to the Renaissance Paul was to the Reformation, and Paul had been confronted in his day with a situation in many respects similar to that which confronted the Reformers. He, though brought up in strict Pharisee principles, had been repelled by the coldness and formalism of the Mosaic discipline. Like the mystic he was, he yearned after absolute and intimate unity with God, and he found it through the mediation of the God-man, Christ. By casting aside every outward requirement and flinging himself wholly upon the

divine grace thus miraculously vouchsafed, he attained the glorious liberty of the sons of God, the peace that passeth all understanding, in short, salvation. And salvation, the free gift of Christ purchased by His passion and not by any works or course of discipline, was a state that a man either has or has not attained. This was the core of Luther's as of Paul's doctrine, it was the solid foundation upon which Western non-conformity with Rome was built.

It is no part of our purpose to examine Luther's teaching, nor all the compromises and qualifications that he allowed, but to make clear the meaning of this spiritual wave that starting from the Cathedral door at Wittenburg, spread outwards like ripples from the dropping of a stone, and whose first stirrings were already felt in England. It was, in its beginning, like all religious movements, a tremendous effort after reality, a striving to get back from the letter to the spirit of religion. It was the same impulse that had moved the Buddha to give over his austerities and, sitting cross-legged among his disciples in the deer-park at Sarnath, to proclaim the passing of the old Vedic ritual; this, and not another spirit had fired the prophet of Islam to proclaim, in the desert, the overthrow of all idols that mocked the majesty of Him, the just, the merciful, the omnipotent. But as in these and all other spiritual revolutions, the prime impulse was marred and diverted by the very worldliness against which it was a protest. New presbyter always, sooner or later, comes to be old priest writ large.

The psychology of Protestantism was obviously subversive of the whole spiritual and therefore of the whole temporal edifice that Rome had built up. Salvation is the gift of Christ, a transaction to which sinner and Saviour are the sole parties, and requires the intervention of no priest, saint nor Madonna. If works are valueless, then of what use are the penances, indulgences, and even, to push the matter to its logical extreme, sacraments of the Church? If the communion between God and man is direct and immediate, then her symbolism becomes mummery and idolatory, a direct violation of the second Commandment. It is now the privilege and bounden duty of the believer to think and enquire for himself; if God is his, how much more is God's word! From Wycliffe onwards it was the first instinct of the Reformers to give the people a Bible they could read and understand for themselves. In brief, the system inculcated by Rome was the direct opposite of Christianity as conceived of by the Protestants; her Pope was their Antichrist, the vicar on earth not of God but of His adversary.

Protestantism itself stopped short of being completely or logically Protestant. Luther, in his great defiance, did but appeal from the tyranny of a Church to the tyranny of a book; Calvin could employ the stake to suppress one who traversed the Nicean doctrine of the Trinity; even John Locke, the father of modern toleration, refused it to atheists. So easily do the fugitives from the Egyptian bondage come to setting up the golden calf in the wilderness.

3

Protestant Origins

It was not to be expected that the idea of Protestantism would take the same hold on the practical English as on the speculative German mind. Abstract ideas have never appealed to the average Englishman, and the great revolutionary waves of Continental speculation, whether these take the form of justification by faith, or the rights of man, or the gospel of Karl Marx, have usually broken in harmless froth against the white cliffs of British common-sense or lack of imagination—according to the point of view. Previous to the Reformation there are certainly evidences of discontent against the Church, but these are mostly on concrete grounds, and there is no evidence of a widespread popular desire for any revolutionary change either of doctrine or system. As for Lollardy, the embers of it certainly smouldered, but the spirit of ascetic puritanism that had inspired it had practically died out during the fifteenth century.

But the sixteenth witnessed a real if limited revival of religious enthusiasm, and this was not without its dangers to a Church whose principal security now lay in the sheer inertia of popular worldliness. An increasing number of prosecutions and, indeed, the very Convocation to which Colet addressed his great sermon, witness to the increasing nervousness about heresy felt by the ecclesiastical authorities. When the storm broke over Germany, and Luther, in 1517, nailed his manifesto of revolt to the door of the Church at Wittenburg, repercussions could not fail to be felt in England.

Some outlet had to be found for the new enthusiasm that was beginning to leaven the vast, inert lump of English Christianity. The attempt to revive the Church from within had proved a failure. Colet died; More went over to the reactionaries; Wolsey's plan of conservative reform was blocked by the pomps and vanities of *Realpolitik*. But the reforming ardour, if it could not find scope

within the bosom of the Church, was bound, sooner or later, to find an outlet of its own. As yet it was confined to a small minority, almost entirely drawn from the middle class in the towns, and the Church was able to crush individual heretics as they arose, without any general sympathy being excited on the martyr's behalf.

But the reactionaries had now a more difficult situation to deal with than in the days of Wycliffe. The invention of printing and the gradual standardization of the English language were rendering the system of popular instruction, which had served during the Middle Ages, largely obsolete. This instruction had naturally been addressed and adapted to the requirements of an illiterate populace, and one most capable of being appealed to by direct visual impressions. When the copying out of a single Bible was a work probably measured by years, and its translation into a barbarous language an unsatisfactory, if not a dangerous venture, there could be no question of the average layman searching the scriptures for himself. So the Church was only taking the sensible and obvious course by bringing home the truths of Christianity to her children by the crude but effective method of making them see with their own eyes what they were expected to believe. Those who know the effect of the cinema even to-day on an uneducated type of mind, will realize to what lengths it is possible to carry the principle that seeing even the most improbable events is believing.

To say that the medieval layman had no Bible is to miss the fact that his very church served him in this light. So thoroughly has the work of stripping and dismantling God's house been accomplished, that it is difficult for us to grasp to what an extent the worshipper found his faith literally realized all round him. Fresco paintings on the walls, stained glass in every window, showed him the familiar incidents of the Old and New Testaments and, painted over the chancel arch or glowing in the West window, the awful spectacle of the Last Judgment and Hell, the literal flames and devils that were waiting for him unless by the grace of God and the good offices of Mother Church he contrived to escape into the fair fields of Paradise by way, probably, of Purgatory. Our Lord, our Lady and the saints appeared before him in lifelike images, and in one or two instances, as that of the Rood of Boxley, the illusion was strengthened by a mechanism that imparted lifelike movement to the figures. How literally these things were taken is instanced by a charming carol, in which the shepherd boy, who has just presented the little Jesus with his pipe, his tarbox and his hat, concludes his

farewell to the Holy Family with, " Farewell Joseph with thy round hat ! " probably a reminiscence of Joseph's halo on a stained glass window.

In the mystery plays, a type of drama that one can still see performed in any Hindu village, the layman could see the incidents of sacred story before his very eyes—God, with his long white beard, arguing with Moses, or Herod, sceptre in hand, leaping from his car amid roars of delighted laughter and raging among the crowd.

It is evident what a tremendous power this method of presentation put into the Church's hands. That its general effect had been towards the uplifting and civilizing of folk who would otherwise have been little better than savages, no fair-minded student of medieval history will venture to deny. But all power is liable to abuse, and where the appeal was to the eyes so much more than to the mind the temptation to play upon popular credulity must have been well-nigh irresistible. The incidents presented to the medieval man were by no means confined to those of scripture. If we visit the Trinity Chapel of Canterbury Cathedral we shall see three beautiful old stained glass windows that, by almost incredible good fortune, have escaped the attentions of Harry the King, Blue Dick the Puritan, and the nineteenth century vandals who demolished Lanfranc's Tower. These windows are entirely devoted to enhancing the reputation of that great asset of the Canterbury monks, the martyred Thomas a Becket. We see a little boy dying, we see him brought back to life again by a diluted mixture of Becket's blood, and then we see the boy's brother duly giving up the ghost in consequence of the neglect of the parents to pay up four pieces of silver at the shrine. The moral is fairly obvious and not unprofitable from the monastic standpoint.

During the Middle Ages, the superstructure of legend and miracle that had been erected over the original Christianity had attained gigantic proportions, and had its sordid and grotesque as well as its beautiful aspect. But what had sufficed for the uncritical intelligence of the Gothic age might prove less acceptable in the sceptical atmosphere of the Renaissance. Even loyal sons of the Church were beginning to wax impatient at the demands made upon their credulity by the custodians of celebrated shrines. Erasmus has left an amusing account of a visit that he and Colet paid to Canterbury Cathedral in the last days of its glory, and how the earnest Colet quite lost his patience with the verger who was showing him the wonders of the place. At another celebrated shrine, that of

our Lady of Walsingham, Erasmus appears to have regarded the whole proceedings as a hugh joke. To more austere or less disinterested observers it was possible that such shrines would shortly appear in the light of offences against God or—excellent things to plunder.

People possessed by the spirit of enquiry and familiar with the resources of the printing press naturally desired to take their Christianity not in the highly sophisticated form in which it was presented to them by ecclesiastical authority, but on the evidence of God's own word as revealed by His scriptures. And the first serious challenge to the Church's authority took the form of an English New Testament, translated abroad by William Tyndale, one of the few Englishmen to be captured thus early by the doctrine of Luther, with whom he associated and on whose German translation he largely founded his own English one. Tyndale happened to be a translator of genius, and his translation, on which our own authorized version is founded, marks a new epoch in English prose. But its dissemination was, not wholly without reason, regarded as a deadly menace by the ecclesiastical authorities in England.

For Tyndale, though by no means always a clear or even a consistent thinker, was possessed of all Luther's abhorrence of the existing ecclesiastical system. His master passion, like that of every genuine Christian revivalist, was to get back to Christ. And the best way of doing this appeared to him to be to allow Christ and the apostles to speak for themselves, without any priestly intermediary. It was only to be expected, therefore, that the bias of his translation should be markedly antipapal. Certain words, he felt, had got so loaded with ecclesiastical associations as to be misleading in the mouths of New Testament characters. For these question-begging terms he therefore substituted others, which sometimes were not above the suspicion of begging the question on the other side. In addition to this, Tyndale enriched his text with notes, largely borrowed from Luther, and of a frankly and sometimes violently tendencious nature.

Tyndale's impelling motive for appealing from the Church to Christ could hardly have led him to act otherwise than he did, and there was in fact only one valid reply that the Church could have made to his translation, which would have been to produce a better one under her own auspices. There was no theoretical objection to such a course, which would have followed logically from the principles of Colet and Erasmus. But the reactionary party in the

Church, which was now dominant, had taken thorough alarm at the persistent smuggling of New Testaments that was going on at the ports, and they could think of no better way than to burn the books and even, in extreme cases, the readers. Tyndale, in fact, managed to unload a whole edition on the Bishop of London, who wanted it for a bonfire, and he used the proceeds to bring out a revised and better one. As late as 1530 the Bishops advised the King that, in the then dangerous state of popular feeling, the time was not opportune for a new translation. Four years later they had seen reason to change their minds, but the avalanche was then fairly under way.

It is an entire mistake to suppose that the majority of English people were particularly desirous of having Bibles. A desire for God's word presupposes a certain intensity of religious feeling, and England, though she had risen a little out of the trough of fifteenth century materialism, was, in the third decade of the sixteenth, anything but a religious country. But she had, on the other hand, very little fixity of faith, and her bonds of attachment to the existing system were frayed almost to breaking point. A few zealous and devoted enthusiasts might easily produce an effect out of all proportion to their numbers, and it was to just such men as these that Tyndale's Testament presented itself in the light of a new revelation. Besides, as every modern advertiser knows, the skilful pushing of a commodity is apt to create a demand for it where none existed before. Every one of these new Bibles was a direct challenge to accepted orthodoxy.

Sir Thomas More now placed himself at the head of the opposition to Tyndale, and devoted the whole of his still undimmed genius to a supreme effort to stem the rising tide of Protestantism. His *Dialogue*, a book until recently almost impossible to obtain, is written with a wit and force that make it one of the most readable polemics in the English language, but if it is a hymn of hate against Tyndale and his Testament, it is an equally uncompromising counterblast to that gentle visionary, Sir Thomas More, author of the *Utopia*. The last shreds of tolerance are thrown to the winds, and even the pretence of a judicial attitude on fine points of translation is eschewed. For all his scholarship, More reveals a bias at least as marked as that of his opponent. His demand that representations of Christ and Our Lady shall be called images and those of the pagan gods idols is as palpably disingenuous as some of Tyndale's own liberties with the text. The spectacle of this cut and thrust duel between two great Englishmen and devoted Christians is unspeakably sad, but

it has a redeeming grandeur that lifts it above the ignoble atmosphere that envelopes too many sectarian controversies. Each stood for a high cause, neither had any more mercy on himself than on his opponent. And now that the dust and din of controversy have subsided, we can recognize them as fellow workers in founding the goodly edifice of English prose, and in the noble army of martyrs their souls march side by side.

4

A Question of Sovereignty

While these tremendous issues were being debated, a mean and sordid quarrel, which had nothing to do whatever with religion, precipitated the revolt of England from the Roman See. The sinister possibilities of the bluff King's temperament had so far been appreciated by no one, with the possible exception of Sir Thomas More, who instinctively shrank from his sovereign's genial advances because he divined that Henry, for all his friendship, would not hesitate to take a friend's life if it were a question of getting another castle in France. If Henry was conscious of his own ability, of his strength, and most of all of his righteousness, he must also have been conscious of his comparative failure to make good. He was neither Emperor, nor conqueror of France, nor arbiter of Europe, in spite of victories like the Spurs and Flodden and diplomacy like that of Wolsey. He must have felt that luck had been against him, and for a temperamental egotist that is a dangerous state of mind, one that is apt to drive its owner to strange lengths if to failure should be added a sense of genuine grievance.

One of his chief misfortunes lay in the fact that he had no male heir, which opened a serious prospect both for his house and for the Kingdom in the event of his death. The King of Scotland, supported by France, might easily have claimed the throne by virtue of his descent from Henry VII, as against the Princess Mary. Now Henry's marriage with his dead brother's wife had only been allowed through the straining of the Church's law almost to breaking point by Julius II, no very reputable Pope even for those days. There was, besides, a fascinating coquette about the court whose sister's favours Henry had enjoyed, but who refused to take her turn unless His Majesty would first make an honest woman of her. No one of the least psychological insight could fail to predict the effect, upon such a solemn egotist as Henry, of such a conjunction of affairs. He was

genuinely shocked at the irregularity of his union with the excellent but now unattractive Princess of Aragon, and was ready to be quite handsome and sympathetic about it, provided she were not so unreasonable as to stand in the way of his doing the right thing. For God's laws are not to be mocked, even after twenty years' complacent infraction, by those interested in keeping them.

What the Pope had done the Pope could undo, and Henry had hitherto been the spoilt child of the Papacy. A golden rose had been given him by the reigning Pope, another golden rose by Julius II, and a sword and cap, together with the title of Defender of the Faith, by Leo X. The least that the Papacy could do was to give Henry's case a fair trial on its merits. This was just what the Pope would not, or rather dared not do. Had he been of Hildebrandine temper, he might have taken his stand on God's law and the Church's, and defied the consequences. But Clement VII was no Hildebrand, he was not even cast in the large mould of Julius II. He was at once a shameless intriguer and an abject coward. It never even occurred to him that his position as Vicar of Christ imposed upon him some obligation to give just judgment; his sole thought was how to advance the interests of his small state in central Italy, and even this low aim he pursued in the spirit of a dishonest, petti-fogging attorney. He veered like a weathercock with the vicissitudes of the Hapsburg Valois feud; he desired above all to gain time. When the French army of Lautrec with an English contingent was overrunning Naples, he was on the point of giving in to all Henry's demands, but when the hand of pestilence had destroyed the commander with the greater part of his army, he was wholly in the Emperor's hands, and the sack of Rome had taught him what comes to Holy Fathers who bear too hard upon the Temporal Head of Christendom. Now the Emperor, though he cared not at all for his aunt, had a lively sense of the insult to his House implied in the dissolution of her marriage.

The wretched Clement was in the most unenviable position. He dared not offend the Emperor and he did not want to offend Henry. The damning indictment against this successor of Peter is best given in the words of Lord Acton, himself a Catholic and, moreover, an unflinching seeker after truth, whatever it might reveal. "When Lautrec was in Italy," he says, "Clement had conceded virtually the whole of the English demands. He removed every impediment to the marriage with Anne, other than the fact that Henry was married already . . . he pronounced against the terms of the

dispensation, intimating that Julius had done what a Pope has no right to do. He promised that Judgment as given in England would be final, and that he would not remove the case to Rome. He was willing that Richmond, the King's son, should marry the King's daughter, Mary Tudor. He did not turn a deaf ear even to the proposal of bigamy. For several years he continued to suggest that Henry should marry Anne Boleyn and renounce the quest of a divorce. In 1530, somebody informed him that this would not do, and that brought him to the last of his resources. He proposed . . . that Henry should live with Anne without marriage and without divorce." [1] Such was the morality of the Holy See in a transaction which has been described by a very different historian and champion of Catholicism, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in this impressive sentence: " Henry sought to lean upon the cushions of Leo, and found that he had struck his arm upon the rock of Peter." [2]

Certainly the rock of Peter solidified wonderfully when, on the conclusion of peace with France, Catherine's nephew became, to all intents and purposes, overlord of Italy. But by this time Henry's never too patient disposition had been stung beyond all endurance. The perpetual shuffling and sharp practice of the Pope were just what was calculated to snap the last bonds of scruple and tradition that restrained him from the attainment of his will at all costs. Had he been a frank cynic like his father-in-law or a mere Machiavellian trickster like the Pope, he might have stomached his discomfiture and bided his time. But Henry, with all his faults, was a thoroughly sincere and even religious man. His experiences with his brother Kings had convinced him long ago that there was no faith anywhere except in himself; he had now made the discovery that the Papacy itself, whose champion and defender he had been, was as false and cunning as the worst crowned sharper. He had a legitimate grievance, and being an egoist without humour, was only capable of seeing his own grievance. God was with him and he would go forward alone. All the pent up feelings in his bosom burst forth in terrible anger against Rome. A man, and certainly a Tudor in such a mood, is likely to stick at nothing and fear nothing.

It is necessary to understand Henry's state of mind if we are to understand the Reformation that took place under his auspices. He was a good Catholic, it was not he that had betrayed the faith but Rome. He had confuted Luther in the past and he had no use

[1] *Lectures on Modern History*, pp. 140–1.
[2] *A Short History of England*, p. 141.

for him now. The Protestants in England were as yet an insignificant minority, and if argument—for he condescended to argue—and persecution could do it, he meant to keep them so. He never dreamed of dropping his title of Defender of the Faith. Nay, rather he would step into the place that the Pope had shown himself unworthy to fill. Like the terrible figure that is the frontispiece to Hobbes's *Leviathan*, he would grasp both the sword and the crozier. Wolsey had shown him the way; the double sovereignty that the minister had wielded should be the prerogative of himself and his heirs. The Church should continue, with the sole change that the King of England should be his own Pope.

It was in this way that Henry regarded the royal supremacy, and no one who has followed his voluminous pronouncements from day to day can doubt that he saw himself, in all seriousness, as the spiritual as well as the temporal father of his people. That exhortation to charity which he addressed to his last Parliament is more the language of a bishop's pastoral than of a King's speech. "How presumptuous," he wrote to the protesting folk of Lincolnshire, "are ye, the rude commons of one shire, and that one of the most brute and beastly of the whole realm, and of the least experience, to take upon you, contrary to God's law and man's law, to rule your prince whom ye are bound to obey and serve and for no earthly reason to withstand!" The act of Six Articles, or whip with six stings, in 1539, was a terrible reminder that though the Pope was gone, the Defender of the Faith was on the throne, all the more determined to resist encroaching heresy from the fact that the task had devolved upon his unaided strength.

The idea of sovereignty, which the Renaissance had brought so prominently to the fore, was now invested with a halo of sanctity that it had never before possessed. So long as the King had been expected to share his sovereignty with the Pope, it had never been possible to elevate him into the position of a divine Cæsar. The Church had her own excellent reasons for keeping monarchs in their places, and the scholastic theory of monarchy had been, in many respects, markedly liberal. Nor had the English people been accustomed in the past to treating their Kings with the respect due to the Lord's Anointed. Of the ten who had preceded Henry VIII, exactly half had either been murdered or died fighting rebels, of the remainder, 'Edward IV was on one occasion turned out of his Kingdom, Henry IV's reign was one long doubtful struggle to keep himself on the throne, and Henry V plunged into foreign war to

keep his subjects' hands off his own throat; even Henry VII had to weather years of intermittent rebellion before he could feel his throne secure.

A respect for sovereignty had indeed been on the increase for some time, but the King's position was put on an altogether different footing when to the temporal he added the spiritual headship of his realm. The supernatural sanctions so elaborately devised to buttress the supremacy of Rome were now all for the enhancement of the King's prestige. For this reason alone it was to his advantage to keep intact as much of the old system as possible, for the same reason that prevents a wise conqueror from devastating a country that he intends adding to his own dominions. The exaggerated theory of the divine right of sovereigns, that caused Elizabeth to be worshipped like a pagan goddess and lured Charles I to his doom, may be said to have first attained its full development with the " prevailing of the gates of Hell " under Henry VIII.

Perhaps " theory " is the wrong word for describing what seems a form of hypnotism capable of subduing the toughest spirits of that worldly time. How else are we to account for the language of devoted loyalty used on the scaffold by men judicially murdered, by men who had shewed not the least trace of humane or disinterested feeling during their lives? Of all the men of that age, perhaps the least lovable is Thomas Cromwell, who had studied Machiavelli in manuscript, and acted consistently on the worst interpretation of *The Prince*. And yet of all the murderous perversions of justice that this man had instigated, none was more monstrous than his own attainder for treason. " He loved your Majesty," Cranmer remonstrated with Henry, " as I ever thought, no less than God." " This," Cromwell had cried, flinging down his cap, when arrested in the Council Chamber, " this, then, is my guerdon for the services that I have done. On your consciences, I ask you, am I a traitor? " And yet, when he was hurried to the block, after not even the mockery of a trial, this hardened worldling of the Renaissance could not even find it in his heart to breathe the " falsely, falsely murdered " of Desdemona. " I am come hither to die," he is said to have told the crowd, " not to purge myself, as some think peradventure that I will. For if I should do so, I were a very wretch and a miser. I am by the law condemned to die, and thank my Lord God that hath appointed me this death for mine offence . . . I have offended my Prince, for which I ask his heartily forgiveness, and beseech you all to pray to the Lord God with me that he will forgive me." Surely these words,

coming from one who could have entertained no hope of earthly profit thereby, are among the most remarkable and illuminating of this time.[1]

They enable us to understand much that seems otherwise obscure and even grotesquely cruel. The enormous extension that was given to the Law of Treason is understandable when we realize that to the prestige His Majesty already enjoyed as the Lord's Anointed, he now added the sacrosanct attributes that had invested St. Thomas of Canterbury. We understand, too, how much that seems to us unintelligibly cruel must have been regarded in a very different light by contemporaries. Perhaps there are nowhere two more pitiful tragedies than those of Sir Thomas More and Lady Jane Grey. It seems as if any softness and sweetness of disposition was cut short as surely as the most delicate early blossoms by the March frost. And yet it seemed less terrible to the victims themselves than it does to us. Human life was a very cheap thing in those days—even More prided himself upon being "*hereticis molestus*"—and a terrible majesty invested the head of the State. The experience of anarchy from which the nation had so recently emerged, and whose renewal was yet an imminent danger, must have convinced the average Englishman that, without bothering too much about abstract justice, it was expedient that one man should die, now and then, for the people.

5

Supreme Headship

Once it became apparent that no satisfaction was to be got from Rome, Henry went about his work of smashing every vestige of alien power in his Kingdom with masterly skill. He had had the unprecedented experience, during the divorce proceedings, of being called into the Court at Blackfriars by one of his own subjects, the Legate Wolsey, and the result of his compliance had been merely that he had found himself thwarted and befooled by having the case called to Rome. Henry felt that he had stood enough of this sort of thing, and that the time had come to see whether an Englishman or an Italian was to be master in England.

[1] Even if we go to the extreme of scepticism and question the authenticity of this speech, the mere fact that it was accepted as genuine shows what was expected and natural on such an occasion. Besides, it rings true, and is in harmony with whatever principles Cromwell possessed.

For whatever may be said for or against Henry, there can be no gainsaying that one of the secrets of his success lay in the fact of his being a thorough and whole-hearted Englishman, with an almost unfailing intuition of his subjects' mentality and prejudices. However arbitrary and high-handed his proceedings might be against those who stood in his way, he nursed and humoured his faithful Commons with a patience and tact which were all the more remarkable when contrasted with the high-handed methods of Wolsey. So far from being the arbitrary tyrant he is sometimes depicted, he may almost be said to have made the discovery of the Commons. The Church held a divided allegiance and the nobility had been a perpetual thorn in their sovereign's side, but the lesser gentlemen in the country and the prosperous citizens on the towns, who were the backbone of English patriotism, might very easily come to identify their wills with that of a sovereign capable of giving them an orderly and hundred per cent English government.

The first step was to get rid of Wolsey. This, from Henry's point of view, was both timely and necessary, and he had no more regret about scrapping a faithful servant than a modern master of hounds makes about destroying any member of the pack who is past service. Wolsey had been an ideal tutor of his sovereign on all the fine points of government, but the time had arrived when the pupil had come to know more about the essentials of the business than the master. Wolsey's grandiose foreign policy had been an expensive failure; his attempts as minister-legate to ride two horses at once had ended in the two bolting in opposite directions; his dictatorial and unconstitutional methods at home had made him the most unpopular man in the country. From this unpopularity the bluff King skilfully dissociated himself by making a scapegoat of the minister. His instincts pointed him to better ways both in foreign and domestic policy.

The House of Commons that was elected in 1529 was anything but the servile body it has sometimes been represented. No doubt the King paid it the compliment of taking a hand himself at electioneering, but an assembly of Pliables was not to be created out of the gentlemen and citizens of England, and this particular House had a corporate personality that might have rendered it formidable to a less skilful manager than Henry. On the crucial question of the divorce its sympathies were by no means wholly with the petitioner. The great-souled lady who had rallied the nation to the triumph of Flodden, the lonely woman who defended her cause and honour

with such pathetic dignity, could hardly fail to command the sympathies of ordinary Englishmen, whatever they may have thought of the Pope and his pretensions. The thing of all others they wished to avoid was a breach with Katherine's nephew, the Emperor, which might affect the Flanders trade. And on one question Henry knew they would be united, which was that of money. His experiences with Wolsey must have taught him that the King who asks for taxes is asking for trouble.

He had two levers by which he might hope to control the assembly. The first was the now intense resentment excited by the power and exactions of the Church, a resentment that implied no sympathy with heresy, but was based partly on national sentiment and partly on a very English determination not to be " put upon ". The second consisted in the fact that to plunder a wealthy and unpopular minority offered an excellent substitute for the more orthodox expedient of direct taxation.

Henry's caution in dealing with the Commons was only equalled by his boldness in striking at Rome when the time came. For some time he was not without hope that Clement, once he saw that England was united behind her King and would not stick at cutting the connection with Rome, would give way. But England was far away, the grip of the Emperor did not relax, and Henry was further off than the Spanish and German mercenaries who only waited the word of command for another sack of Rome. Accordingly the Rock of Peter stood firm, and His Majesty's indignation rose to boiling pitch. The successive moves in the game were timed with relentless skill. First the more unpopular abuses were selected for attack; then the clergy were reduced to humiliating submission by the cynical step of indicting the whole body of them for following Henry's example and recognizing Wolsey as legate; next, the King proceeded to take the matter of the divorce into his own hands, or those of his obedient servant, the new Archbishop Cranmer, and to have it finally disposed of, without reference to Rome, in a mock trial at Dunstable; then as the Pope still proved recalcitrant and inclined to answer defiance with defiance, the last threads of connection with Rome were cut, all money that had been paid to the Holy See was diverted into the royal coffers, and in 1534 the work was crowned by an Act making the King Supreme Head of the Church of England.

Thus with surprising ease had England cut herself free from the Catholic[1] Church and proclaimed her own and her sovereign's

[1] I use this term for convenience, and without prejudice to any Anglican claims.

complete independence in the face of all the world. But the situation was fraught with dire peril. Henry had signally affronted the Pope, the Emperor, the conscience of Catholic Europe, the ancient faith of his subjects. It was not as if, like his rivals on the Continent, he could count on the support of a disciplined standing army. The best that he could muster in the way of regular troops amounted to no more than the Beefeaters, or Yeomen of the Guard. When he wanted to suppress a rebellion he had to rely on such aid as that of the local nobles and their retainers, or on a muster which left him dependent on the goodwill of his subjects for an army.

Whatever may have been the faults of the Church, such a change as that from the Papal to the royal supremacy was bound to raise the King a host of enemies. Every monastery was a centre at least of passive resistance; the preaching friars, who on their peregrinations were less amenable to discipline than the monks, were by no means satisfied with a merely silent disapproval. The glass windows of the churches, with their story of Thomas a Becket and of an earlier Henry flogged and humiliated before his shrine, pointed a moral whose significance could be emphasized by a mere pulpit gesture. Many of the old Churchmen were ready to support Pope and Church against King and country. The saintly Bishop Fisher was intriguing for the support of the Emperor, until the axe cut short his activities forever. Cardinal Pole, one of the most liberal Churchmen of his day, a scholar of singularly sweet disposition, did not hesitate to publish a book overseas, in which he urged the invasion of his own country by Spanish troops, men whose cruelties were to become proverbial.

The divorce, the ostensible cause of the whole quarrel, was never generally approved of on its merits, and the new Queen, Anne Boleyn, in spite of her English birth and pretty face, never succeeded in imposing on her countrymen for anything better than the adventuress she was. Women openly insulted her when she went about with the King, and the Duke of Norfolk once so far forgot himself, after a violent wrangle, as to call her *grande putain*. Even at her coronation procession, so many of the crowd kept on their hats as she passed that her jester was obliged to pass it off by telling them that they had scurvy heads.

We find Chapuys, the Imperial ambassador, writing, just after the dissolution of Henry's first marriage, stating that the great desire of the English people was that his master should send men. "Every day I have been applied to by Englishmen of rank, wit and learning, who give me to understand that the last King Richard was never

so much hated by his people as this King." The head of the great northern House of Percy is reported, a little later, to be not too well pleased with the King and his ministers, and his physician told Chapuys that if the Emperor would make the smallest effort, the King would be ruined. The Marquis of Exeter, a scion of the House of York, was guilty of treasonable communications; Lord Darcy talked of 1,600 gentlemen in the North ready to rise, and Lord Dawbeny of a rising of the priests. From the vast collection of Henry's state papers we can catch some echo of the murmurings of his poorer subjects, how he was denounced as a wretch, a bawdy wretch and a traitor, and how one sportsman averred in his cups that he would kick His Majesty's head like a football.

In this desperate situation, and with the menace constantly over him of a Holy League between the Emperor and King of France, Henry displayed a calculated audacity as remarkable as his previous caution. With the active support of Parliament, he treated the country as if it were in a state of siege, and enforced what was practically martial law. He had taken the irrevocable step of asserting his sovereignty alike in Church and State; now, at the peril of his life and throne, he must strike down all opposition to his authority at home, while keeping at arm's length the threat of foreign intervention. He had at his side a minister as bold as himself but without any illusion of conscientious scruples, in the shape of Thomas Cromwell. This self-made adventurer, who had been a common soldier of fortune in Italy and had pushed his way to the top by sheer, unscrupulous ability, was a thoroughly consistent Machiavellian, and pursued his sovereign's policy with a scientific detachment that took no more account of justice or mercy than if men and women had been pieces on the chessboard. He does not appear to have been cruel—though there was no doubt a streak of this quality in Henry's temperament—and it can at least be said that their policy of " thorough " was far more merciful in practice than the saintliness of Henry VI or the chivalry of Edward III.

The first thing to do was to make one or two prominent examples of the King's determination to permit no divided loyalty. The Church had, indeed, shown surprisingly little spirit in resisting the attack on its privileges, but there were a chosen few in whom the Catholic faith still burnt bright enough to make them ready rather to die than to acknowledge a temporal sovereign as their spiritual head. Of these the most prominent were the monks of the London Charterhouse, who were, accordingly, selected for the frightful penalties of

high treason. When their prior and two fellow-priors of the order who happened to be staying with him were, with certain of the brethren, disembowelled alive in their canonical habits, the rest of the Churchmen must have recognized that they had now a sovereign who would stick at nothing. The Carthusian martyrs found no successors. But one further lesson was needed. Fisher and More enjoyed a reputation not only English but European as leaders of the spiritual Renaissance, the one for his saintly life, the other for his scholarship. But they were known to disapprove of Henry's claim to the supreme headship of the Church, and their very existence might serve as an encouragement to others. They were accordingly confronted with the choice between treason to their faith and their sovereign, and choosing the latter, were graciously permitted the axe instead of the rope and knife. About the same time a dozen or so Dutch Anabaptists were burnt to death, but about this piece of ecclesiastical routine neither Royalists nor Papists particularly bothered.

Though Henry had thus piled horror on horror's head in the face of an astonished Christendom, the thunderbolts of vengeance almost ostentatiously hung fire. There had been much fear of a Spanish invasion, but Charles V was not of the stuff of which crusaders are made, and Henry proceeded quietly to consolidate his position by getting rid of the papal garrisons in the shape of the monasteries. A commission was appointed to enquire into their abuses—no new thing, as Henry VII's Archbishop Morton and Wolsey had both provided precedents—but Cromwell and the very shady characters he appointed to carry out the investigation had no other object than to find a pretext for their destruction. By looting the monasteries, Henry would be providing himself with a means to avoid asking for taxes at a time when rising prices were making it difficult for him to attain the vital aim of living of his own ; it would also serve to create a vested interest of those who shared in the plunder, and would stand to the last by a regime which was their sole security for keeping it.

In 1536 Parliament was induced to dissolve all monasteries of a less income than £200 a year—for in this, as in all other matters, His Majesty was determined not to hurry his Parliament faster than it was prepared to go. It was in this year that the first serious trouble occurred in enforcing the new policy, and its location is significant in enabling us to estimate to what an extent the nation was really behind Henry in his attack on the Church. It is an extraordinary

fact, when we come to think of it, that a veritable revolution, accompanied by unheard-of sacrilege and piteous martyrdom, could be carried out without exciting in the more civilized parts of the Kingdom, so much overt opposition as had been aroused by the attempt to collect the taxes levied in support of Wolsey's policy.

But in the Northern counties, which were furthest removed from Continental influences and where more primitive conditions of society obtained, an attempt, by means of a Parliament preponderantly Southern, to overturn the whole social system, could hardly fail to excite that rebellious spirit of which the North was so prolific. It is probable that the monasteries here—so many of them situated in the wilds and away from the great centres of population—were performing a more useful service than in the South, where the vagrancy problem had reached dimensions beyond the capacity of monastic resources. It was in the North that, after a revolt in the backward agricultural county of Lincolnshire had been easily suppressed, a really formidable rebellion broke out in which all classes participated, and whose leaders seem to have been high-minded men inspired by a religious idealism quite unique in that age.

Henry met the situation, the most formidable with which he ever had to deal, with an address that Machiavelli might have envied. His own forces on the spot were outnumbered and disaffected, and it was of vital importance to get the rebels to demobilize. This he did by fair promises, an amnesty, and the offer—which throws a flood of light on the political significance of the rebellion—of a Parliament at York. Having once got the rebels to go home, the King had the game in his hands. An excuse was easily found for revoking the amnesty, and such a thorough application was made of military frightfulness that the Northern counties were crushed and cowed into complete submission. Nor did the King neglect to follow up his advantage, for by means of a Council of the North he subjected this most turbulent part of England to so powerful an administrative machine as to bring it for the first time under effective royal control.

The time had now come to push the campaign against the Papacy a step further by making a clean sweep of those shrines whose miraculous attributes formed no small part of the Church's prestige, and produced a fat income out of the wallets of devout pilgrims. A war of plunder and ghoulish sacrilege, waged not against the living, but against the bodies of dead saints, constitutes, to our modern minds, the most horrible phase of this grim struggle of the new

monarchy against the old spiritual empire. We shudder when we hear of Saint Cuthbert having his coffin burst open, and of the smith crying in horror, "alas, I have broken his leg!" It is dreadful to think of Christian Englishmen dishonouring the remains of Saint Alban, the first of our martyrs, of Saint Edmund, of many another hero of the faith, hallowed by the unquestioning reverence of centuries.

But it is only fair to remember that the opponents of the Church had some reason for regarding these dead saints as being more formidable than living enemies. The Church had not hesitated to use them even for the pettiest ends. Laymen striving for what they deemed their rights against some monastic corporation might find themselves accused of robbing not the monks, but Saint Alban or Saint Edmund. It was only natural that these worthies should share in the unpopularity of the proceedings done in their name, and that when it was proved, by profane demonstration, that their supernatural powers could not protect them from outrage, there should have been a certain unholy pleasure in violating their taboos.

We have already seen how even reforming churchmen like Erasmus and Colet had regarded with amused or impatient scepticism the whole supernatural paraphernalia of such lucrative pilgrimage shrines as Canterbury and Walsingham. It was easy, therefore, to start the cry that these supernatural claims that had brought in so much solid cash to the religious houses, and gave the Church such a formidable though vague power, reposed on a foundation of sheer fraud and humbug. What Erasmus had regarded with amused tolerance was received by reformers of the new school with fierce moral indignation, which easily communicated itself to the public at large when the claims of these images were one after the other exposed; when the image of Christ at Boxley, which had bowed its head in token of forgiveness, was shown to be a puppet worked with wires (and if the device was perfectly above board, no one, we imagine, would have been so foolish as to expose the thing publicly in the neighbouring town of Maidstone); when honest Latimer threw out of doors an image that was supposed to be immovable; when a drop of our Saviour's blood, at Ashridge, that had been secured at vast expense by Earl Edmund, nephew of Henry III, turned out to be a drop of clarified honey, and a similar discovery was made about the even more famous Blood of Hailes in Gloucestershire. It was a grim and characteristic joke of the time that a huge wooden image from North Wales, which possessed the power of drawing souls

from Hell, was used as fuel at the burning alive of a certain Friar Forrest.

The most dramatic iconoclasm of all was when Henry showed that he had still power to stagger Christian humanity by looting the most famous shrine in all Europe, that of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, and casting the Archbishop's sacred body out of its shrine no man knows whither. There is no conclusive evidence for the story that the dead man was actually summoned to appear and answer a charge of treason, and was condemned by default, but we can only say that the incident would have been thoroughly in keeping with Henry's character and sense of the dramatic, and he was quite capable of arguing that if Becket could come gliding out of his shrine to celebrate Mass, as we see him doing on one of the Canterbury windows, he was equally capable of coming into court. Henry at least paid Becket the compliment of treating him as a living and powerful enemy, and when he ordered every image or representation of the proud priest to be destroyed, he was removing a perpetual challenge to the supremacy by which he stood or fell.

The larger monasteries were now marked down for destruction. This was mostly done by peaceful surrender, for the terror created by Henry and Cromwell was such as to appal the stoutest of abbots. Another dramatic example was however considered expedient, which consisted in the hanging, drawing and quartering of the heads of three of the greatest Houses, those of Reading, Glastonbury and Colchester. The spirit in which Cromwell went about his work is shown by his instruction, in the same paper, for the execution as well as the trial of the Abbot of Glastonbury, the most sacred spot in England. No circumstance was omitted that could shock the feelings or affront the susceptibilites of devout Romanists. The lesson was sufficient. The monasteries fell one by one with scarcely the faintest show of resistance. One after another the most splendid buildings in England had the lead stripped from their roofs, their stones carted away, perhaps to build some rich man's mansion, their rich libraries dispersed, their inmates turned adrift, and the crafts, of which they were the nurseries, lost.

It probably occured to few to repine at the fearful loss involved in the destruction of so many noble buildings—the only contemporary reference, that we remember, to the beauty of the monasteries occurs in a proclamation of the Northern rebels. How great a reverence was entertained for a sacred building, even under Catholic

auspices, is shown by the fact that the lovely glass of Lincoln Cathedral had been used, by the citizens, as a mark for crossbow practice, and the glass in Exeter cloisters was "all to brast" by the tops and tennis balls of the young sportsmen who thus beguiled the hours of divine service. To the average man of the Tudor age a building was intended for some definite purpose, and when it no longer fulfilled that purpose there was no reason why it should cumber the ground. Why retain an enormous church at Glastonbury, that was perfectly well served already by its own parish church, when the stones could be put to much better use in paving a road across the marshes to Wells and the lead could be stripped and sold by some titled profiteer? Where a church was retained, just so much of it was kept as sufficed for local requirements, usually the nave, as at Dunstable, Waltham and Shrewsbury, though at Pershore, with excellent judgment, the choir was selected. Only in one or two instances, as at Tewkesbury and Saint Albans, was the whole building preserved —even the royal foundation of Westminster only just escaped from the clutches of Lord Hertford, afterwards the Protector Somerset.

There is no need to waste words on what no words can express, the sordidness, the shamelessness and the vandalism of the whole proceedings. When we read of that furtive adherent of the old faith, the Duke of Norfolk, joining with Cromwell, whom he hated, to share between them the venerable priory of Lewes, when we hear of Lord Audley selling off the stones of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, one of the most imposing buildings in London, with all its monuments, at sixpence a load in order to clear the ground for his own house, and know that this was only typical of what was going on all over the country, we feel inclined to disown our fathers, but even this seems less monstrous than the perfect indifference with which Henry appears to have regarded the obliteration of the tombs of his own ancestor, the first of his name, at Reading, and of the mighty Arthur, Champion of the British race, from whom our Kings had been proud to claim descent, at Glastonbury. But neither at the time, nor for long afterwards, does the destruction of the monasteries appear to have aroused any widespread sentiment of this nature. Never, so far as the more civilized and prosperous part of the country was concerned, was a change so momentous accomplished with such ease and smoothness.

6

The Road to Ruin

At the end of the fourth decade of the century, Henry had obtained an authority and prestige that even the greatest of his predecessors might have envied. The alien power in England was utterly shattered; the Church was even more under the King's control than the State. He had eclipsed all records of sacrilege, he had outraged the cherished beliefs of centuries, with complete impunity and success. In so far as policy can be regarded apart from morals, his success had been deserved. He had pursued his ends with unerring discrimination and self restraint. His audacity at home had been rendered possible only by a masterly inactivity abroad.

The worst apparent danger was fairly weathered. It must have been the nightmare of every loyal Englishman that sooner or later the two great Catholic potentates, whose feud was paralyzing the arm of Rome, would compose their differences and unite for the destruction of the arch-heretic, who could not even be sure of the undivided loyalty of his own subjects. At least once this contingency seemed on the point of being realized. But not for a moment did Henry waver or display the least signs of alarm. He knew perfectly well with whom he had to deal. The Machiavellian Kingcraft does not lend itself to Crusades nor to knight errantry on behalf of injured aunts or Pontiffs. Francis did not scruple to fling the Turk against the Christian bulwark of Vienna nor to ally himself with the heretic princes of Germany. As for the Emperor, the very vastness of his possessions weakened him for attacking England. He soon found that his subjects in the Low Countries cared more for English wool than for any wrongs of the Church or Catherine of Aragon. The economic necessity for maintaining the old Burgundian Alliance soon outweighed any considerations of imperial or family policy. At the height of his peril, Henry coolly gave a slight object lesson of his real strength by closing the Staple at Calais, thereby bringing an embassy of almost frantic remonstrance from a distressed Flanders. The lesson was sufficient; the Low Countries would not help the Emperor in cutting their own throats to spite his nephew's face. "I never saw the King merrier than he is now," was the comment of an observer,[1] at about this time.

It was a question of foreign policy that led to the fall of Cromwell. He had been feeling after an alliance with the Protestant

[1] Quoted in Professor Pollard's *Henry VIII*, p. 307.

princes of Germany against the Emperor, and with this end in view had promoted a marriage between his master and the Princess Anne of Cleves. But the lady in question turned out to be an ugly, German frau, whom, to her own great contentment, her now experienced bridegroom quickly divorced and pensioned off. Cromwell's policy was beginning to savour too much of Wolsey's, and Henry, whose own policy had been one of calculated unadventurousness, and had no desire to advertise himself as the champion of heresy, came to the conclusion that Cromwell had served his purpose and would be most useful as a scapegoat. He was therefore disposed of with as little sentiment as he had displayed towards his own victims.

Henry was now on the full tide, if not of a Catholic, at least of an anti-Protestant reaction. He had taken himself terribly seriously in his new role of Supreme Head of the Church. He was perpetually at work supervising, dogmatizing, settling what truth his subjects should and should not believe, with as grave an assurance as if his royal will were to be done in Heaven as it was in England. But looking at it, as we can now, in a truer perspective, we can see that Henry himself was being carried along by forces that he could neither understand nor control, and that both his friends and his enemies agreed in overrating his importance. At the beginning of the divorce case he had probably had no other object than to get his way with the Pope. Afterwards he had hoped to retain the old doctrine and system intact with himself in the Pope's place. But it is impossible to knock the keystone out of an arch without injuring the fabric, and in the course of his desperate struggle with Roman power in England, Henry had found himself obliged to knock out much more than the keystone.

The Church of which he had made himself Supreme Head was cut off from organized Christendom, deprived of her permanent garrisons, impoverished and discredited. The dykes which she had erected against heresy were pierced; the breach, insignificant at first, was continually enlarging itself, and it was beyond the power of any sovereign to say to the flood, "thus far shalt thou come and no further." For however orthodox Henry may have intended to be, it was impossible to embark on a mortal struggle with the Papacy without playing into the hands of those who were fighting the same enemy on doctrinal as well as political grounds. Henry was not above a certain amount of conscious collusion with Lutherans abroad, while at home his natural anxiety to fill prominent ecclesiastical posts with men who were sound against the papal connection could

hardly fail to let in some who harboured advanced, not to speak of heretical views on points of doctrine. The new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, was travelling as fast towards Protestantism as his timid and king-fearing nature would permit.

In no way could the King have done more to open the floodgates of heresy than by his determination to provide every church in his realm with the Bible in English. He had some reason for this partiality to the Scriptures, for it was on the strict letter of the Levitical Law that he had taken his stand in the matter of the divorce, as against the arbitrary fiat of a Pope. Cromwell and Cranmer were both determined to force the English Bible on the Church, and though up to the end of the reign Tyndale's version was officially anathema, it made its appearance, so far as it had gone, under a very thin disguise in a translation called Matthew's—the rest of it being based on a translation from the Latin by Miles Coverdale. This was the basis of our English Bible, and of the magnificent folio that was published by royal authority in 1539 and ordered to be placed for public inspection in every Church in the Kingdom.

But Henry had gone much further than he intended. By inviting Tom, Dick and Harry to judge for themselves on matters hitherto expounded for them by their spiritual fathers, he had started a movement that even in illogical England could hardly fail to reach a Prostestant conclusion. The whole realm was seething with controversy, and to devise royal or episcopal formularies was only to add fuel to the fire. Henry was pursuing two utterly inconsistent aims when he tried to shatter the prestige of the Church in order to defeat the Pope, and to maintain that prestige under his own headship. The miracles of the shrines had been exposed with contumely all over England, and yet His Majesty imagined that he could retain the supreme miracle of the altar. Our Lord's Blood at Hailes and Ashridge had been resolved into honey or gum, and yet to hint that it was wine on the parish altar was to incur the guilt of heresy.

Henry's iron will and the humourless gravity with which he accepted his position as Supreme Head knew no limitations. The last eight years of his reign saw him strenuously endeavouring to maintain the Roman faith and system in an anti-papal England. Londoners were presented with the rare double spectacle of Catholics, ripped up for treason, having their last moments consoled by the spectacle of blazing Protestants. The English Bible was indeed retained, but its use was forbidden to women (except very well born

ones), artificers, servants, working men, and others not considered fit to have their own judgment. And meanwhile the tide swelled in spite of the royal notice board that showed so proudly above the waters. Henry himself, there is some reason to believe, was inclined to make a further move in the Protestant direction when death cut short his activities forever.

In these last years, when he was a sick man and his nervous irritability had become almost a mania, his statesmanship appears to have lost some of its cunning. The infinitely patient diplomatic finessing that had kept him free from foreign attack during the critical decade of his struggle with the Papacy was at last discarded in favour of a foreign policy as adventurous and costly as that of Wolsey. Henry had all along cherished designs of uniting the British Islands under his own rule; he had met with a large measure of apparent success in Wales and Ireland, and the alliance between Scotland and France was a long-standing nuisance. Failing to draw Scotland into his sphere of influence, he tried, in 1542, to cut the knot by the sword, and was so far successful that the Scottish main army bolted from a handful of English troops, and the King of Scotland died of grief, leaving an infant daughter, whom Henry determined to secure as a bride for his son Edward, and thus to unite the two realms. His method of courtship, however, was by military frightfulness on a scale that might have brought a blush to the cheek even of Edward Longshanks. Finally Henry availed himself of Protestant assassins, to get rid of the head of the Catholic party in Scotland, and an English fleet succeeded in carrying most of the gang to safety. The net result of these proceedings was that Scotland was reduced to misery and England nearly to bankruptcy.

The natural sequel to a Scottish war was one with France, which Henry undertook, in conjunction with the Emperor, the nephew of the woman he had driven into a premature grave. Instead of marching, in 1544, on Paris in co-operation with his ally, Henry wasted time and money in capturing Boulogne, an utterly useless acquisition that cost far more than it was worth and whose possession constituted an intolerable affront to the French King. The Emperor hastened, on the first opportunity, to conclude a separate peace, leaving Henry in the lurch, with the result that next year a great French armada descended on our shores. The fleet, however, that Henry had raised by the plunder of the monasteries proved amply sufficient to deal with the menace, and in 1546 a peace was

patched up with France that left Henry saddled, for a term of years, with the expense of keeping up Boulogne.

These unprofitable futilities had given a fatal tilt to Henry's policy. At a time when it must in any event have been hard, owing to the decreasing value of money, it had now become utterly impossible for the King to live of his own. It is proof of the ascendancy he had acquired that he could draw on his Parliament for subsidies on a lavish scale, and even get them to sanction the repudiation of his debts. But there were limits even to Henry's power of squeezing his subjects, and by this time the credit of the country was on its last legs, and Henry's agents were having the greatest difficulty in getting the Antwerp financiers to advance him any more. The monasteries were thoroughly gutted, and it was a choice between bankruptcy or finding fresh extra-parliamentary means of raising the wind.

The means that he adopted, and that were improved upon after his death, have a strangely modern sound. They were confiscation, and the inflation, or, as it used to be called, the debasement of the currency.

7

A Patriot Polity

The most noteworthy feature of Henry's reign consisted less in what he did than in what he refrained from doing. He might raise the power of the monarchy to an unprecedented height, he might burst the bonds of Rome, but not for one moment did he attempt to burst the bonds of the English Constitution. If he aspired to be Pope in his Church he stopped short at being Caesar in his realm. He would no doubt greatly have preferred this position had it been attainable—his use of the word "imperial" testifies to this—but it was just the strength of the Tudors to know when a thing was not attainable.

In his struggle with Rome the King found Parliament an invaluable and even indispensable ally. The Church had made a mistake in tending to isolate herself as a body from the lay estates of the realm, and deliberately retiring into her own Convocation. True, the presence of Bishops and Abbots in Parliament did something to maintain the connection, but the Commons' House was naturally hostile to a community alien in sympathies and owning another allegiance than its own. As Bishop Fisher cried, "Now with

the Commons is nothing but 'Down with the Church'. And all this, meseemeth, is for lack of faith only."

Henry was the ally and not the tyrant of his Parliament, which was becoming, in many respects, an even more powerful body than it had been in the Middle Ages. Its privileges were not only maintained but extended. The Commons were now, what they had not been before, a debating assembly, and even Thomas Cromwell, at the height of his power, found it expedient to get himself elected for the borough of Taunton, besides getting as many other reliable people elected as the arts of the corrupt electioneer could secure. That Henry usually got his own way was not due to any weakening of the Commons' power, but rather to a temporary conjunction of circumstances that put him, to some extent, out of its reach, added to the fact that he and the Commons were, for the most part, working together for a common end. If Charles I had been in as little need of taxation as Henry VIII, there would have been no Petition of Right and no scaffold set up at Whitehall.

Not at the most triumphant period of Henry's reign were the Commons ever a servile body. They might alter the succession and create various new kinds of treasons, for these things they were not concerned in opposing. But they had no hesitation in throwing out, more than once, an unpopular government measure like the Statute of Wills and Uses. Hall tells us that a motion was actually before the Reformation Parliament urging the King to take back his wife, and the Imperial Ambassador amplifies the story by telling his master that two members, with the general approval of the House, demurred to providing for the defence of the Border on the ground that the Scots could do nothing without foreign aid, and that the best plan would be for his Majesty to put himself right with the Emperor by taking back Katherine. It required all the royal arts of persuasion to get this dropped. In 1534, we find the Commons refusing to make spoken words treason. So late as 1545, we read of government measures like the Bill of Colleges having narrowly escaped, and of "divers others" finally dashed in the Commons. It is true that a statute was passed in 1539 giving royal proclamations the force of law, but with the important qualification that they should not be prejudicial to the life or property of any subject. Even so, the statute appears to have remained a dead letter during the few remaining years of Henry's reign, and under the auspices of the Protector Somerset it was immediately repealed.

Even more important than Parliament itself was the Common

Law, that labyrinth upon whose foundation our liberties are built. There is no doubt that, unlike Parliament, the Common Law was in a parlous, if not a critical condition during Henry VIII's reign. The Year Books, which had formed a unique feature of English Law during the Middle Ages, first became intermittent, and then, in 1535, ceased altogether. The power and prestige of the prerogative courts were at their highest, and put the courts of the Common Law quite into the shade. In Germany the Civil Law triumphed even more decisively than the Reformation, in Scotland the English Common Law proved quite unable to hold its own. Professorships of the Civil Law were founded at Oxford and Cambridge; Reginald Pole had tried to persuade his cousin, the King, to receive the Roman Law in England. And yet the Common Law lived on, the Inns of Court maintained a continuous though undistinguished existence, the very abeyance into which it had fallen saved the ancient Law of England. Nobody knew better than Henry not to waste time and energy in rooting up a plant that is doing no harm, merely because it is untidy. And a new period of legal activity was shortly to end the darkness that divides the age of Littleton and Fortescue from that of Smith and Coke.

The nation, now that the question of an undivided sovereignty was in the way of being definitely settled, was becoming organized to an extent that the Middle Ages had never known. Two years after the Royal Supremacy had been definitely affirmed, Parliament took the momentous step of passing an Act of Union with Wales. The Principality was now divided into shires and received representation in Parliament. She was, in fact, to be, as far as legislation could effect it, completely Anglicized. English law was transplanted into Wales, superseding all the Welsh customs, regular judicial circuits were arranged, and the unfortunate Welsh were compelled to use the English tongue, which very few of them knew, in all legal procedure. The enormous pedigree surnames of which the Welsh gentry were so proud had now to be dropped, whereby, as old Bishop Fuller puts it, " much time is saved for other employment, especially in winter, when the days be short." Hardship and the injured dignity of a proud people were the result of these changes, but the full weight of England could be brought to bear, and the Council of Wales had the situation firmly in hand. One of Henry's ablest administrators was Bishop Rowland Lee, its president, a man of ruthless will who put down disorder with an iron hand. England was strong enough to accomplish in the little state at her doors what she lamentably

failed to do on the other side of the Irish Channel. The rude and turbulent Northern countries, the seat of chronic rebellion, were taken in hand with equal firmness by the Council of the North.

Under Henry VIII's auspices England was fast becoming mistress in her own house. Her system of government was beginning to take the form it was to retain until the King himself became the figure-head of an oligarchy. At the centre of the administrative organization was the Council, which, as we can see from all the literature of the time, occupied a position of enormous importance, and was, on the whole, the most successful part of all the Tudor polity. It had now ceased to be a collection of magnates who, under feeble sovereigns, had succeeded in overshadowing the Crown; new men of the type of Dudley and Cromwell had come to preponderate in it; it was, in a truer sense than any modern cabinet, a committee of experts, and well under the control of a strong monarch. Local government had already taken the unique and typically English form of organization under the local gentry of each shire, appointed by the Crown through the Lords Lieutenant, and armed with judicial and executive powers of the widest scope. This was, on the one hand, a powerful check on the Crown, which could not control the justices of the peace as a Caesar or a King of France his local officials, but it might, in time, pave the way for a more insidious and pervading tyranny, that of the squire and his relations.

Such was the polity that was being shaped by the directing hand of the Tudors and those influences which, because they are up to the present beyond the control of human will, we sometimes vaguely designate as social forces. We find the circumstances faithfully reflected in the thought of the time. It is Machiavelli, with his conception of sovereignty and kingcraft, who is the great European influence at this time, but for the intellectual fatherhood of the Tudor system we should be rather inclined to look to Fortescue. The Tudor ideal was not that of the Italian Prince, ruling by any means whatever, but rather of the strong constitutional sovereign ruling by law. But the sovereign had gained incalculably in prestige and authority by the elimination of the Catholic *imperium in imperio*. It is characteristic of the time, and indeed of European thought between the Renaissance and the French Revolution, that a very high estimate was taken of the sovereign's powers, both for good and evil. He was conceived of as the potter, and his realm as the clay for him to mould. If anything was good for the State, it was the sovereign's business to carry it out, either by his

personal fiat, when this fell within the limits of the law, or by legislation. For Parliament did not as yet propose to take on the functions of a legislative assembly more than to sanction or, on occasion, reject, legislation proposed by the King and his Council. The powers of the Crown were, by general consent, exceedingly wide, and extended to the regulation of the minutest details of national and personal life. Men must keep the fasts of the Church after these fasts had been officially branded as superstitious, in order to encourage the fish-trade; they must bury their friends in woollen shrouds to provide employment for clothiers.

The social philosophy of this time bears an obvious resemblance to that of eighteenth century, particularly of the French *philosophes*, whose doctrines, though they may have indirectly helped on the Revolution, were the stand-by of more or less benevolent despots like Joseph II of Austria and Frederick the Great of Prussia. But there is an important difference in the fact that the *philosophes* thought of men as all being very much alike, more or less homogeneous units in the pattern arranged by the legislator, but the men of the sixteenth century had inherited from the Middle Ages the conception of a social hierarchy in which everyone had his degree, and obtained his full development in the limited sphere to which God and his birth had assigned him. That was the idea of the great schoolmen as much as of homely reformers like the author of *Piers Plowman*. The sixteenth century retained the conception of the social hierarchy, but tended to lose sight of the Christian and democratic basis on which it had reposed, the idea, that is to say, of the great world made up of little worlds, each a complete universe in itself—the great world of the State comprehending the little worlds of Richard the King and Piers the Plowman, each made in the image of the great world and the great God, and though maintaining its place, since " in His will is our peace ", each of equal and infinite importance in the sight of God.

But now the Renaissance has set in, with its tendency constantly to belittle the importance of the individual in the scheme of the universe. The great world remains, but the little world tends to be lost sight of. A spirit of real social contempt and superiority begins to creep in, that is essentially unmedieval. A lord is now a being of nobler clay than a ploughman; a rich man would be less insulted at being assigned a " place on the serpent's knee " than at being addressed as " brother Dives ". Even Henry VIII, a really popular King, does not hesitate to tell his subjects of Lincolnshire that they

are " brute and beastly ". The destruction of St. Thomas's shrine at Canterbury is an event of less importance than the break up of the Canterbury pilgrims, or rather of the spirit that made that uproariously democratic journeying a possibility.

Perhaps the conception that is most dominant in the political writings of this time is that of " degree ". Its most illuminating because its most naive expression is in an essay written by that pathetic, though too priggish and cold-blooded child, Edward VI. His earnest determination to do the best for his Kingdom evinces itself in his resolve to have all his subjects neatly arranged in their proper social niches. " No one part of the body doth serve for two occupations; even so neither the gentleman ought to be a farmer nor the merchant an artificer, but to have his art particularly. Furthermore, no member in a well-fashioned and whole body is too big for the proportion of the body; so must there be in a well-ordered Commonwealth no person that shall have more than the proportion of the country will bear; so it is hurtful immoderately to enrich one part. I think this country can bear no merchant to have more land than £100, no husbandman nor farmer above £100 or £200, no artificer above 100 marks; no labourer much more than he spendeth." Poor boy—he was never to have the chance of proving how such simple-sounding schemes of state socialism work out in practice!

The early reformers, who constituted the most active intellectual force of this time, were for the most part thoroughly imbued with this conception of society. It was the State that had vanquished their arch-enemy Rome, and it was the State Church that they hoped to capture for their doctrine. The great Luther, so terrible to the Roman Church, had been more subservient to the State and more brutally contemptuous of the bottom dog than any schoolman. Logically his doctrine tended, and did eventually lead, to Radicalism, but these early reformers were for the most part Tory and conservative. The Church Catechism exhorts the Christian to order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters, to " submit himself ", to " honour and obey ", and to do his duty in that station of life unto which it shall please God to call him. Thomas Becon, in his *Flower of Godly Prayers*, has one for " all men, that they may walk in their vocation and calling ". Sometimes this tendency to exalt the powers that be leads to the formulation of doctrines which would justify naked despotism. Even honest old Hugh Latimer, no flatterer of kings, allows himself to proclaim that the

King " must have as much as is necessary for him . . . and that must not thou, or I, that are subjects, appoint, the King himself must appoint it."

Vehement Latimer, the man of the people, might sometimes allow himself to slip into language like this, but nowhere do we find a finer and more fearless exposition of the Tudor social doctrine than in his sermons. For his conception was of a country, an England, ordered like a disciplined army, in which the officers hold their commissions, not as a privilege but as a solemn responsibility, in the consciousness that to whom much is given, from him shall much be required. He never hesitated to thunder the most unpalatable truths, in good homely English, at the greatest in the land—no timeserver, he! Sprung from the stock that had provided the " poor archers " of Agincourt, he loved England with that passionate, and—if we may borrow the idea from Wordsworth—motherly affection, that is more apt to find vent in scolding than in praise. He is as sure, he says, of his mission to preach God's word to Englishmen, as if he had heard Christ say a thousand times, " go preach to Englishmen, I will that Englishmen be saved." Lack of charity and spirit of social service on the part of the rich, neglect of duty by the great, covetousness in all, he fearlessly denounces. He even draws a comparison between bishops and the devil, to the advantage of the latter, who is at least diligent about his business. The social hierarchy, which is a mechanical contrivance in the conception of young Edward VI, and was becoming a cloak for tyranny in less disinterested minds, glows in the vision of this noblest of our Protestant reformers with a fire as holy as that of Piers Plowman. Indeed, those who believe in reincarnation might easily imagine that Latimer was Langland come to life again.

The separation from Rome does, indeed, mark a notable advance in the growth of patriotic feeling. The Papal influence was the direct negation of patriotism, just as old Rome had extinguished all local and tribal sentiment in the provinces under her rule—and England was not even, in the Papal view, a distinct province. When it was a question of serving either Rome or England, the greatest of our Churchmen, Pole and Fisher, were ready to sacrifice the country of their birth to that of their spiritual second birth. Even More, the most accomplished Englishman of his time, can hardly be classed as a patriot. He dreamed of Utopia as being the exact opposite of the island Kingdom he knew, and his conduct while in office shews how little he dreamed of realizing Utopian

conditions in England. "If I should take any country for my own," he writes during his last imprisonment, "it must be the country to which I come, and not the country from which I come." Even Wolsey, worldling though he was, had come to his fall because it was impossible for him to pursue a foreign policy conducted solely in the interests of his country and sovereign. He was hampered, fatally in the end, by the consciousness that in the last resort he could not break with Rome.

The reformers were under no such divided allegiance except during the brief interlude of Mary's papal restoration. Then, indeed, we find the martyr Hooper praying for his "natural country" which had passed from the Pope's curse to God's curse. But even so, these reformers did not, like Pole, disown their allegiance and affection for their country—how should they, who had no earthly alternative? Patriotism was as natural to the believer in a State Church as it was hard for a citizen of the spiritual Rome. The evils of a divided allegiance were too obvious to escape the notice of the reformers. "Read the chronicles of England," counsels Tyndale, the translator of the Bible in his *Obedience of a Christian Man*, "and thou shalt find them (the churchmen) always both rebellious and disobedient to the Kings and also churlish and unthankful, so that when all the realm gave the King somewhat to maintain him in his right, they would not give a mite," and, in short, "in all their doings, though they pretend outwardly the honour of God or a commonwealth, their intent and secret counsel is to bring all under their power."

The most striking patriotic manifesto of this time comes from Thomas Becon, a reformer whose writings have fallen into an unjust oblivion, accountable for only by the fact that he had not the honour of martyrdom, but lived comfortably on into the reign of Elizabeth. As we might expect from so wholehearted a lover of his country, he had taken much of his inspiration from Latimer. His little treatise on the Policy of War is worthy to be classed among the most eloquent expressions, in our language, of patriotic sentiment. "Our parents," he says, in words that would have been endorsed by Aristotle, "only give us this gross, rude and mortal body. Our country doth not only receive and joyfully sustenate it, but also most opulently adorn and garnish both that and the mind with most goodly and godly virtues." With one of those intimate touches, of which Wordsworth was to be so prolific, Becon remarks how glad is an Englishman when in foreign parts to get any letters telling him of what is being done in his native country.

"It doeth me good," he cries, "yea, it maketh me seriously to rejoice even at the very heart to see how glad my countrymen are to serve the commodities of this my country, England. Whatsoever our most excellent prince or any in his name commandeth, it is with all reverent fear and loving expedition accomplished. No man grudgeth, no man muttereth, no man thinketh the precept unrighteous nor the burden heavy, so fervent a love do they bear their country. All with one consent employ their endeavours to satisfy, even unto the utmost of their power, the imperial precept of the King's most royal majesty." It is characteristic of the time and of the reformers that one of the prime effects of patriotism should, in Becon's view, be obedience to a superior.

Such the standpoint of a patriotic Englishman towards the close of Henry VIII's reign. It is no doubt sweet and glorious thus to love, as to die for one's country. But he who is tempted to give himself to the full tide of Becon's enthusiasm may perhaps be arrested for the moment by the sweet irony of Sir Thomas More's smile, and the deep, penetrating eyes that look at us out of the canvas at Knole. He at least found no cause "seriously to rejoice" in the state of his native country. He dreamed of a land where work should be a pleasure, where instead of a mad, suicidal competition of man against man and people against people, all should harmoniously unite, by every imaginative and scientific means, to obtain for the common weal the kindly fruits of the earth, so that in good time all might enjoy them—a land where all wills should be united in the simple task of being happy. The good Sir Thomas knew that it was a dream; he would be a bold man who would maintain that we are nearer Utopia in the twentieth than in the sixteenth century. And yet the sole hope of civilization rests in such a dream becoming practical politics.

8

The Social Problem Becomes Acute

Perhaps More was the only man who had any clear vision of the sinister possibilities of the new social order that was superseding that of Catholic Christendom. His life was cut short before he had time to see the most catastrophic shock of all administered. The egotism which gave such terrible strength to Henry's purpose carried with it the disadvantage of making him an opportunist, a strong

man without vision. All his might and cunning were bent to the sole purpose of securing a free path for his will; he felt the Pope's opposition as a sick man feels some intolerable irritation, and provided he could make an end of it he had little thought of the ultimate consequence to his realm. When, by Herculean efforts, his path was clear, this tendency in his nature became more and more dominant. His egotism took on a definitely neurotic tinge, he became furiously impatient of the least opposition. To live with him was now a dangerous adventure, even to so mild and tactful a sixth consort as Catharine Parr.

When by the destruction of the monasteries he put the seal on his policy of breaking the Roman power, he had one of the greatest opportunities that have ever come to an ambitious monarch. He might have more than realized the ideal of Fortescue, and put the Crown in a position to live of its own. For there are in every nation two kinds of property, one of which is in the hands of individual citizens, or groups of citizens, and the other which is retained in the hands of public bodies or of the State itself, and is what Coleridge designated "the commonalty". The monasteries stood somewhere on the borderland between the two; originally and in theory administering their property for God's sake and the Church's, they were, in practice, more and more sinking to the level of private corporations. Now if the King could have secured the whole, or even the greater part of this property, here would have been an ideal opportunity for him to have carried out a perfectly practicable policy of social betterment, one not at all beyond the scope of the best intellects of that time, and at the same time immensely to have strengthened his own position. The need for education was one especially appreciated by the men of the Renaissance, to supply it is the first of the reforms aimed at by Edward VI in his essay. Here was a golden opportunity to have stepped into the place of the Church, and endowed education on the liberal scale that might have been expected from the friend of Erasmus. The relief of the poor might have been organized, and what had been carelessly performed by the monks as a matter of routine might have been carefully and wisely taken in hand by the State.

Unfortunately Henry did not see further than the attainment of the two objects of breaking the Roman power, and providing himself with a temporary substitute for taxation. His position was no doubt a difficult one. Without the support of a standing army, he could only conquer the opposition of part of his subjects

by making allies of the remainder. His reliance was most of all upon the new men, who had risen up under the auspices of his House, and who were not likely to be hampered by scruples or traditions in putting through his policy. But to carry out so startling a revolution as that of destroying the whole monastic system of the country, they must be bribed by a lion's share of the proceeds. The faithful Commons, many of whom had already an interest in the land, might require something more than argument to overcome their scruples. Henry's eye was not on the future but the present, and to break the monasteries at all must have seemed a startling enough feat. And so it came about that the great opportunity was missed, with momentous consequences both to the Crown and nation. The Crown profited to quite an insignificant extent compared with these upstarts, who were practically turned loose to plunder the wealth and lands of the monasteries.

It is from this time that most of our great families, that finally achieved the double feat of robbing the peasantry and making the Crown a figure-head, come into light. We need only cite one typical instance, that of the Whig House of Russell. Obsequious genealogists have discovered the original Russell amongst the knights of the Conqueror, but the less imaginative historian traces the founder of the House in a pushing merchant of Weymouth in the reign of Henry VI. This merchant, probably a Gascon, having made his money in the wine trade, consolidated his social position by marrying the daughter of a Dorsetshire squire. But the man who first brought the name of Russell into the prominence it has retained ever since was John Russell, who eventually became Earl of Bedford. He was a vigorous adventurer, one of those men who seem born with the gift of getting on, and are not greatly scrupulous about the means they employ to that end. He was a brave soldier, and neither better nor worse than the average courtier of Henry VIII. The King soon found out that Russell was a useful man and kept him pretty constantly employed. He bore his part in one of the darkest and dirtiest transactions even of that time, the judicial murder of the last Abbot of Glastonbury, a good and able man, who had been indiscreet enough to defend, to the utmost of his power, the treasures of his monastery, and whose head was, in consequence, fixed on its gate. In the same year Russell became a peer, and when, in 1555, he died, full of riches and honours, he bequeathed a princely estate formed out of the loot of monastic houses all over the country. The names of Covent (or Convent) Garden, and of Woburn Abbey

testify to this day on what foundations the wealthiest of our ducal Houses is built.

There is no need to sentimentalize, as is sometimes done, about the monasteries. To talk of "the shaven men that were quaint and kind" is to display a woeful ignorance of the real facts about the monks, who were very far, at the best of times, from forming disinterested colonies of philanthropists. Even in the heyday of medievalism the monasteries were corporations with a keen eye to their business interests, and with as little hesitation as Shylock himself in exacting the uttermost farthing of their dues. The chronicle of Jocelyn of Brakelond, admittedly the most pleasing picture of monastic life we possess, shews how the attention of the whole community was focussed on the problem of enforcing the last letter of their legal rights. When the poor men rose in the great peasants' revolt of 1381, the two objects of their special hatred were the lawyers and the monks. It was not that the monasteries lacked the will to be oppressive, but that they were too much fettered by tradition and routine to adopt the go-ahead methods by which the lay landlords were transforming the social system of the country-side. They were therefore less likely to disturb customary tenants, or to turn tillage into pasture in order to ensure higher net returns.

Therefore when the greater part of the monastic lands fell into the hands of business-like parvenus, who rack-rented and evicted with the object of making the most possible out of their new estates, the process of social change was enormously accelerated, at the very time when some steadying influence was the thing most needed. But as if this was not enough, Henry's military extravagance induced him to strike another blow at the social system hardly less shattering than the dissolution itself. He debased the coinage. This policy was carried forward to even more scandalous lengths under the hungry adventurers who ruled the Kingdom after the fall of the Protector Somerset.

Thus was the Tudor idea of raising money by any and every extra-Parliamentary means pushed to the point of madness. Even if we had not the experience of history to confirm it, a little reflection would suffice to shew that nothing can be more revolutionary in its effects than violent and arbitrary fluctuations in the value of money. All customary economic relations between man and man are either dissolved or suddenly changed in fact, while remaining unaltered in name. Habit is the great conservative force of society, but the habit of contentedly accepting a shilling is likely to be rudely

broken when that shilling comes to buy less than a sixpennyworth of goods. No more unfortunate time could have been chosen for Henry's experiment, since prices were already on the upgrade and would tend to be so owing to the amount of silver that was beginning to flow into Europe from the New World. For about a year after the first debasement matters hung fire—the country had not time to adjust itself to the change; then prices rose steeply and universally.

We have the evidence of one of the shrewdest economic observers in our history, John Hales, as to the effects of this change. Every class was hit. The gentlefolk, whose avarice had been the theme already of More's denunciation, now found themselves driven by the keenest necessity to make both ends meet. Many of them who had been accustomed to maintain a goodly retinue of servants were now reduced to abandoning their estates and taking lodgings in London, or hanging about the court with "a man and a lackey". The result was that, finding the value of their rent roll reduced to a half or a third of what it was, they were either driven to rack-renting or turning tillage into pasture and driving the poor cultivators off the land. Employers of labour in the towns complained that it was impossible to find their apprentices and servants meat and drink at the enhanced prices, and that they were obliged to dismiss them all except one or two apprentices. "Therefore the journeymen . . . being forced to be without work, are the most part of these rude people that make these uproars abroad, to the great disquiet of the King's Highness and also of his people." But it was, as usual, the man at the bottom of the ladder who was hit hardest of all. With rents being raised, food costing more and more, and men turned out of their holdings on every hand to make room for sheep, his lot was a hard one. Those who have studied present labour conditions might be tempted to surmise that wages would have risen in proportion to the price of living. This, unhappily, was impossible, because in the universal scramble the labourer was far less capable of helping himself than the landlords and merchants, and because, with a society in rapid transition from a customary to a business footing, the labour market was considerably overstocked. To substitute sheep for men was too often a paying proposition.

The tragedy of the time is expressed, eloquently enough to those who have had experience of such things, in the dry words of Thorold Rogers, who points out that when the currency was finally reformed by Elizabeth, it was too late to repair the mischief. "The proportionate value of meat is nearly three times the old rates,

that of corn nearly two and a half times, that of dairy produce two and a half times. But the rise in wages is little more than one and a half times." In other words, the poor man not only lost the comparative security he had enjoyed in the Middle Ages, but he emerged from the turmoil of Reformation and Counter-Reformation with less food and less clothes and less command over the good things of life than before. These are more tragic happenings than the loss of Calais and the removal of a few titled heads.

But inflation did not exhaust Henry's extra-Parliamentary means of filling his gaping pockets. The monasteries were gone, but there were still various kinds of wealth that might be assumed to be tainted by papist superstition and that might bring in a much-needed harvest to the Court of Augmentations. The ring of *nouveaux riches* who had grown fat on the profits of the monasteries were impatient for another share out, and the straits of the government were desperate. Accordingly the next objects to be singled out for plunder were " colleges, free chapels, chantries, hospitals, fraternities, brotherhoods, gilds and stipendiary priests ". In theory it was the religious or superstitious property of these institutions of which they were to be relieved, but the connection between religion and philanthropy was very close, and this act, and a subsequent one passed in the first year of the next reign, were put in force by men whose interest it was to interpret it in the most grasping sense possible.

Thus commenced a pillage meaner and more fraught with misery than that of the monasteries, a pillage that went on with redoubled zest when the hand of the strong King was withdrawn and the realm was at the mercy of the spoilers' ring. All over the country hospitals were being closed and their inmates flung out to die, schools starved for lack of funds, churches stripped of everything that would sell, from the bells to the communion plate. The exact extent of the damage may have been overstated by the righteous indignation of historians who, in modern times, have come to realize the sort of work that was being done under the guise of reformation. The larger hospitals may, as Professor Ashley maintains, nearly all have managed to survive; a certain proportion of the schools may have taken on a new lease of life as grammar schools; the trade fraternities may not have been so much affected, and economic forces were at work that must in any case have created the pauperism and unemployment that the process of pillage only accentuated. But confiscation so shameless and so systematic cannot have been carried out without incalculably increasing the distress and lowering the moral

tone of the country. It is only by multiplying instances—and they are legion—that one can understand how true is Canon Jephson's dictum that "the richer classes went mad with the lust of gain". One of the most impressive is gleaned from the records of All Saints' Church at Bristol, where we can still see the site of what is probably the first free library on English record, established by the Gild of Calendars, and conducted on thoroughly up-to-date principles, the prior acting as librarian, and explaining and lecturing to readers. This was sold off for the benefit of a certain Sir M. Partrick, leaving but the bare room and a gracious memory. Thence we have only to walk some hundred yards and we shall come, at the foot of Christmas Steps, to a headless Madonna flanking the beautiful Early English door of a warehouse. It was once the Hospital of Saint Bartholemew.

Statistics are proverbially easy things to dispute over, but the evidence is plain and obvious, without touching figures at all, that the social problem, as we should now call it, had become dangerously acute towards the middle of the century. There is no thinker or statesman worthy the name who is not sensitive to the alarming increase of distress throughout the country. Latimer is not afraid to tell the rich to their faces of their covetousness and the straits to which it was reducing their less fortunate brethren. "London was never so ill as it is now. In times past men were full of pity and compassion, but now there is no pity; for in London their brothers shall die in the streets for cold, he shall lie sick in the door between stock and stock, I cannot tell what to call it, and perish there for hunger; was there ever more unmercifulness in Nebo? I think not." This testimony is more than confirmed by that of another reformer, of a more extreme type than Latimer, the puritan divine Robert Crowley, who writes in a rude but telling style of the golden opportunity that was missed when the abbeys were suppressed "all by a law". He tells us of a merchant who, coming home from overseas, sees a splendid mansion on the site of an almshouse:

"Good Lord!" said this merchant,
"Is my country so wealthy
That the very beggars' houses
Be built so gorgeously?"
Then by the wayside
Him chanced to see
A poor man that craved
Of him for charity.

" Why," quoth this merchant,
" What meaneth this thing ?
Do ye beg by the way
And have a house for a king ? "
" Alas ! sir," quote the poor man,
" We are all turned out,
And live and die in corners
Here there and about.
Men of great riches
Have bought our dwelling-place,
And when we crave of them
They turn away their face."

9

Tammany and Common Prayer

It was too true. Men of great and often of plundered riches had succeeded in obtaining a monopoly of power, now that the Church was conquered and the strong King dead. For with all his faults, Henry VIII never ceased to be both strong and popular, and if any justification were possible for the ruthlessness of his government, it would be found in the events that happened after his death. Woe, indeed, to the land whose King is a child ! The man who tried to take the reins of government from Henry's hand is one of those characters that must ever remain a puzzle. The Duke of Somerset, as he now became, was among those who had enriched themselves most lavishly out of the general plunder, he was a strong and could be a ruthless soldier, and yet, like so many brave soldiers, he was of weak and vaccillating character, and unlike the generality of those who have grown fat on tainted wealth, a pitiful and sincere friend of the poor, a man with a preference for gentle over harsh methods of government. " What is the matter then ? " complained one of the hard-bitten Lords of the Council, " liberty ! liberty ! And your grace would have too much gentleness ! " The people, after his death, spoke sorrowfully of Somerset as " the good Duke ".

Somerset tried to substitute liberal principles for the iron rule of Henry VIII. He made a genuine and most honourable effort to do justice in the matter of enclosures, and a Commission was appointed to make a thorough investigation of the evil with a view to remedying it. It would have required a stronger man than the Protector to have enabled to it succeed. The new rich were now

firmly in the saddle, and able to employ all the arts of corruption to defeat the efforts of the commissioners. Somerset hesitated; he tried to be gentle with men who were as capable of appreciating such leniency as famished sharks, and he was lost.

The commons of the most civilized part of the country, the East Anglian counties, rose in desperate revolt. They were no wild and cruel revolutionaries, like those of the French Jacquerie, but earnest, moderate men, who conducted themselves with dignity and restraint, and who were by no means confined to the members of one class. They set up their own system of justice and refrained from any acts of cruelty. They were, in their English way, merely asking for what they considered their legal rights, which the head of the State had shown himself unable to enforce, and they pulled down the enclosures and slaughtered the sheep with as good a conscience as will. Their moderation threw away the one slender chance they had. They were content to sit quietly down in their camp at Mousehold Heath instead of taking the offensive. Somerset, for his part, was unwilling to strike at men whom, in his heart of hearts, he knew to be fighting against intolerable wrong, but at last, in an evil moment, he committed the suppression of the revolt to the Earl of Warwick, subsequently Duke of Northumberland, who achieved the rare distinction, in that age, of being the greatest scamp of the Dudley family, and therefore of the new upper class. This man, with the appropriate aid of trained Spanish and Italian mercenaries, achieved a piteous massacre of the unhappy peasants. The revolt had failed even more miserably than that of Wat Tyler, and the path was now clear for a social revolution which, on this occasion at any rate, was not from below.

The "good Duke" did not long survive this triumph of order. His head rolled on the scaffold before a grief-stricken crowd. The whole machinery of government was now in the hands of what was little better than a gang of thieves. The coinage was still further debased; Parliament was packed with Northumberland's nominees; corruption and pillage went on unchecked. To free his hand for the plunder of England, Northumberland concluded a treaty that surrendered all our conquests in France and Scotland—which it must be admitted we were better without—and brought the Northern kingdom, whose little queen was now at the French court betrothed to the Dauphin, completely within the French sphere of influence, a fact that caused the King of France to talk inflated nonsense to the effect that he had added Scotland, if not England, to his

dominions. It was a humiliation that Henry VIII would have cut off his right hand rather than have endured.

The problem of pauperism now begins to force itself upon the attention of statesmen. It is probable that the suppression of the monasteries, which had doled out broken meats indiscriminately to beggars at their gates, had insignificant effects in comparison with constant evictions in the country and chronic unemployment in the towns. These were creating a surplus in the labour market with which the monasteries would have been incompetent to deal. As in India now, when each village is an economic unit governed by custom and almost sufficient to itself, the problem of pauperism hardly arises. Each locality is capable of dealing with its own poor. The transition from a local and customary to a national and capitalist economy is bound to entail a certain floating residue of unemployed with which the State alone is competent to deal. Incidentally, the bargaining strength of capitalism depends upon the largeness of this residue. It is in 1536 that the first comprehensive attempt was made to deal with the poor relief, but the government had not yet got beyond the idea that the provision of relief is an act of charity, and therefore voluntary. They thus made a sincere attempt to regulate relief without providing the means. The temper of the governing class in the next reign, as well as the panic aroused by the growing hordes of vagabonds, is evinced by an act of 1547, which was happily repealed after a year, ordering that any able-bodied man or woman refusing to work should be branded with a hot iron, made the slave of the informant, and, after two attempts to escape, put to death.

It is noticeable that on the restoration of the Roman faith under Mary, Parliament, which was subservient enough when it was a mere question of burning heretics, was adamant against any proposal to make the owners of monastery lands restore their doubtfully gotten gains.

Meanwhile the Protestant reformers were reaping the full benefit of the political situation. Somerset had been a man of real tolerance, and presented the almost unique phenomenon in a ruler of that time of a Broad Churchman, who desired to go as far as practicable in the direction of religious liberty. Northumberland, who cared neither for religion nor liberty, was made of sterner stuff, and was perfectly well aware that living, as he and his associates were, on the plunder of the Church, it would be as well for them to put as wide a gulf as possible between England and Rome. Accordingly

he threw his whole influence, backed by the powers of the State, actively and intolerantly on the side of the Reformers, who accordingly saluted him as a faithful soldier of Christ, and also as Joshua and Moses, a compliment that might considerably have surprised that meekest of men.

Just as Henry had tried in vain to arrest the Reformation altogether after having got rid of the Pope, so Northumberland and his gang were forcing the pace a great deal faster than the nation was prepared to stand. A new type of Protestant was coming over from Germany and Switzerland to whom Lutheranism was only a shade less heathenish than popery itself. John Knox, who was to carry Scotland for Calvinism, was an influence to be reckoned with in England. The newly appointed Bishop of Gloucester, Hooper, was a thorough-going Puritan, who objected even to wearing vestments. There seemed every chance that if only the King could have lived and Northumberland have kept his ascendancy, the religious Radicalism of Zwingli and Calvin might have been forced on the country.

It is strange to think that among so many masterful characters, the Henries, Cromwells and Northumberlands, the Gardiners and Maries, who dominated the stage during this time of flux and turmoil, the man whose influence proved most lasting and whose views were substantially embodied in the final settlement was the timid and vacillating Archbishop Cranmer. His distrust of logical extremes and his instinct for compromise were thoroughly English and his scholarship and gift of writing beautiful prose enabled him to render priceless service to the new born national Church. The prayer book, whose use was enjoined by Act of Parliament in 1549, and which was considerably stiffened up, in a Protestant sense, under Northumberland's regime, was largely his work, with the assistance of Ridley, Bishop of London. It is a thoroughly conservative compilation, founded mainly on the old Catholic Use of Sarum and a more recent breviary composed by Cardinal Quignon, and enriched by Cranmer's wide reading in ancient and oriental liturgies. Hardly anywhere does it aspire to be an original composition, except in the Catechism, where Cranmer and Ridley afford splendid demonstration that it was from deliberate policy and not from lack of genius that they stuck to translation.

Just before Edward's death, the fabric of Anglicanism was completed by the issue of forty-two articles, which are substantially the same as Elizabeth's and our own thirty-nine. The result was

a Church and a compromise calculated to infuriate a logical Latin or Calvinist, but as thoroughly in harmony with our national temperament as the Common Law itself. Based upon immemorial precedent, deliberately framed so as to provide as many loopholes as possible for tender consciences, amiably vague on what were, in more than one sense, burning points of doctrine, orderly in externals, respectful of person and class, and yet breathing a fragrant tenderness peculiarly her own, she is, in fact as well as in name, the Church of England, and so strongly had weak Cranmer built, that his Church and his prayer book have survived all the assaults of Catholic reaction and Puritan revolution.

10

Protestant Radicalism

Towards the middle of the century, the contending forces of Rome and reform entered upon a deadlier and more uncompromising phase of their struggle. With the doughty but illogical Luther as the principal figure of Protestantism, the issues at stake were not clearly enough defined to preclude the possibility of a compromise. The best intellects on either side were making tentative efforts towards such a solution, and at one time it seemed as if the liberalizing section of the Catholic Church, that represented by Erasmus, was about to gain the mastery. Protestantism was not yet by any means an ideal fighting cause. It was hampered by a subservience to the powers that were, which was constantly enjoined by Luther. This was all very well where the reigning prince happened to be a Protestant, but when he was not it constituted a fatal handicap, insomuch that even Luther himself was obliged to hedge somewhat, towards the end of his life, by excepting the subjects of ungodly princes from the necessity of obedience in matters of faith.

Even worse were the liberalizing Catholics from a fighting standpoint. Their aim was to weaken the traditional strength of the Church at the very moment of peril. The keen edge of dogma was to be blunted, the iron discipline relaxed, the acid of criticism applied to who might know what matters of faith. A new conquering empire of light and reason might seem desirable enough to scholars of the Renaissance like Erasmus, but it had no part in the system or programme of Rome. By authority she stood, with its relaxation she would fall. A rigid centralization was the strength of the

Pontiffs as it had been of the Caesars, their temporal predecessors. Between Rome and liberty there was a great gulf fixed.

In any prolonged conflict of ideas, backed by force, the tendency is always for the extreme sections on either side to gain control. This is perhaps, more than any other, the besetting evil of warfare in all its forms. Where truth and righteousness cease to be striven for, and the object is to overcome an enemy, the voices of reason and of moderation cease to be heard. Nobody wants to see his opponent's point of view when he is going over the top; in the heat of a contested election good party men are more ready to score off an opponent than to sympathize with him. There is one fate for the Girondin, the Menshevist, the Modernist and the Trimmer. For the survival of the fittest implies, more often than not, the killing off of the best.

So in the Reformation, as the sense deepens on both sides that they are fighting for dear life, the men of compromise and reason are forced to give way to the extremists. The divergent tendencies are now pushed to extreme limits, and it is appropriate that the man who first accomplished this for Protestantism was the Frenchman, Calvin. It was his business to sweep away the compromises and inconsistencies of the earlier reformers, to formulate and define a fighting creed as keen-edged as a sword, and whose strength lay in its principles being the logical antithesis of those of its opponent. For in faith and organization it pitted a consistent Radicalism against the Toryism of Rome.

In Calvin's view the whole of mankind was, from birth, divided into two rigidly defined and mutually exclusive classes, the elect and the damned. The degradation of man was unspeakable, his utmost efforts could do nothing to mitigate it, but God's grace was infinite and His purposes inscrutable, He gave it and denied it to whom He would. It followed that such a thing as the freedom of the will did not exist. You were bound for Heaven or Hell as you might be locked into the up train or the down train, and there was an end of it.

Now it would be easy enough for anyone to shew that the logical result of such a belief would be to paralyze all human effort. Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we are saved, or damned, as the case may be, would be the counsel of ordinary common-sense, in so far as we can conceive of an absolute automaton being in a position either to give or receive any advice worth having. Calvin himself meets these criticisms by characterizing them as "the

gruntings of filthy swine ", or by arguing in a circle that because the evidence of election is holiness of life, it is therefore incumbent upon him who would be saved to induce a state over which he has no control whatever, by counterfeiting the symptoms. But to criticize Calvinism on grounds of reason would be as absurd as to discuss the logic of a bayonet. Its value was not speculative but practical, and it is not in its conscious appeal to the reason but in its subconscious appeal to the emotions that its strength lies.

For, in practice, it amounts to this, that the devout Calvinist always happens to be, and feels himself to be, of the elect, and his enemies, with equal certainty, among those whom God will arise and scatter in this world and roast in the next. This absolute conviction lends him a terrible strength. God is for him and with him, mightier than all those who are against him, his is the spirit of the fierce and confident Hebrew battle songs. The elect man needs no priest nor ceremony to intervene between him and the God Who already dwells in his bosom; he needs not to adorn his churches, who is already adorned with all the beauty of holiness. Strength is his, and also, too often, a hard and intolerant spiritual pride—do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? The believer will go so far, upon occasion, as to believe that Heaven would cease to be what it is without the pleasing spectacle of the damned all writhing below. He will be utterly pitiless against those whom God Himself has cast out. At Geneva, under Calvin's auspices, a child was beheaded for having struck his parents, and one of the reformer's personal enemies done to death by torment for mistaken views about the Trinity. And yet Calvin was a faithful friend and an entirely disinterested enthusiast. His creed may have been gloomy, austere and unlovable to the last degree, but it was as terribly efficient for fighting purposes as that of Islam, which it so closely resembles.

The Church organization conceived of by Calvin was exactly calculated to take root and flourish in lands dominated by the power of Rome. It is true that he accepts the scriptural precept about obeying the civil power, but with the important proviso that the obedience we owe to the will of God, which with the elect usually coincides with their own wills, shall remain unimpaired. For the rest, the Church is no centralized despotism, but the whole body of the elect organized on a rigidly democratic basis. In Calvinism everything is organized from the bottom upwards; the flock elects the pastor, and no greater sanctity attaches to his person after his

election than before, since all God's people are equally holy. The Church is no centralized despotism; it owns no head but Christ, and wherever two or three are gathered together, in a barn or an open field, there is He in the midst of them, there is His Church in all completeness. It will easily be seen how perfectly adapted is this system for propaganda in a hostile country. Every group of the faithful must be burnt or rooted out before Calvinism could be conquered. Its strength was that of the Hydra.

At the same time the fact was never lost sight of, that the end of Calvinism was to create the most efficient fighting spirit possible. If the organization of the Church was democratic, it eschewed the very idea of liberty. Its discipline was adamant and all pervading. The most intimate affairs, even the decencies of private life, were not exempt. The elder or pastor might, in theory, be a man of like sanctity and passions with his flock; in practice he was often a remorseless inquisitor, and every community of the faithful constituted itself collectively into a permanent vigilance committee over the sins and peccadilloes of its individual members. The simple fact of being happy with any but the solemn mirth of assured salvation was enough to bring persecution on the offender's head. Those who felt themselves already fully saved had not the least hesitation in judging and condemning those whom their consciences happened to put outside the pale, and to the faults of others their consciences were peculiarly sensitive. The dividing line between a Valiant-for-truth and a Holy Willy was not always so easy to draw in practice.

Calvinism after all only carried the Protestant faith so far as was necessary for the maximum combative efficiency. The logical end of Protestantism is rationalism; it is as easy to refuse the authority of Scripture as that of the Pope and General Councils. To-day it may be the Church that is rejected, to-morrow it may be Christ. Such great minds as Newman's have seen that there can be no logical halting place between complete acceptance of authority and stark unbelief. But complete unbelief makes poor fighters, and the day had not dawned when belief could be sustained without magic. The magic of Calvinism was cruder and less elaborate than that which it superseded, but it was sufficient. The Bible became a magic book, texts of an ancient civilization, often imperfectly translated, became potent spells—even honest Bunyan could talk with devout fervour of the grasshopper being a burden. Sunday, or rather the Jewish Sabbath, though not with the sanction of the

first reformers, fell under a regular taboo, and became a day of unchristian gloom. A peculiarly horrible superstition was the belief in an all-pervading black magic; it was enough to be an old woman and poor, to be in daily peril of the most fiendish cruelty that malice and brutish fear could devise. With such weapons at command it is easy to understand how new presbyter came to be old priest writ large.

CHAPTER III

GLORIANA

1

Counter Reformation

The Church of Rome was at last thoroughly aroused to the necessity of closing her ranks and tightening her discipline, for a supreme struggle to check the revolt against her power and to recover her lost provinces. Her intellectuals, who followed more or less the lead of Erasmus, were thrust aside or capitulated, in effect, to the new uncompromising policy. Few of them were, in fact, men of much moral stamina, and some, like our own Cardinal Pole, were ready to vindicate their suspected orthodoxy by encouraging persecution.

Centralization had ever been the strength of Rome, and now, in the hour of peril, it was her obvious policy to draw the bonds of her despotism, mental and spiritual, as tight as possible. The first step of all was to define her dogma, and this was done in the long, desultory and sordid council of Trent, which was at least efficient in laying down the doctrine of the Church in a form that permitted of no compromise with Protestantism, nor hope of it. The next step was to impose the whole of, and nothing but this dogma upon the minds and consciences of the people. The Church did not condescend to argue, nor did she permit argument against her. A man must believe or burn. Hence the refurbishing and strengthening of that most terrible instrument of bodily and mental tyranny, the Inquisition.

It was, moreover, time for Rome to look to her legions. The sloth and indifference of her old monastic garrisons had grown notorious; this was to be reformed as far as possible, and new, and more formidable fighting orders were to be called into existence. As the Albigensian heresy had called forth the Dominicans, so now did the Protestant heresy call forth the Barnabites, the Capuchins, and above all the Jesuits. This last order carried the principles of bodily and mental despotism to their extreme limits. The Jesuit ceased to be a man, he became part of a machine. He was the best

drilled of soldiers, his life and conscience were placed unreservedly at the disposal of his superiors, he thought nothing of going to be tortured scientifically by Red Indians nor of venturing into countries where the very membership of his order was death. Perfectly organized, subtle and resourceful beyond measure, the Jesuits were everywhere, conquering the heathen, winning back the heretic for Rome. As for the priesthood, this was taken in hand by the Theatines, an order of priests with monastic vows.

The dogmas of the new Catholic revival may have been the very antithesis of Calvinism, but there was a curious similarity in spirit between these rival versions of Christianity. For the Counter Reformation inaugurated a Puritanism hardly less rigid than that of Geneva. Gone now was the luxurious worldliness of the Renaissance, that made the rooms of the Borgias a delight forever and found its proudest expression in St. Peter's at Rome. Popes of a new type had come to reign, men of austere earnestness, capable of torturing themselves as well as others. The pomps and vanities of the world were severely frowned upon ; even music, that special object of the Puritan's aversion, was in danger of being driven out of the Churches by the Council of Trent, and finally saved when Palestrina played so beautifully before the Pope that he compared his music to that heard by St. John in the New Jerusalem. Saints, as devout as any of the Middle Ages, walked the streets of Rome, and one of them, the blessed Philip of Neri, revived something of the spirit of St. Francis. The children, whom he specially loved, might, he said, chop wood on his body, so that it were not displeasing to God. And meanwhile the thought and beauty of the Renaissance were being strangled in the land of its birth. The Popes, with the immense resources of the Vatican library, tried to start a Christian culture, but it was a culture in chains. The power that burnt Bruno and imprisoned Galileo was the manifest enemy of enlightenment, powerful only to destroy. The spirit of the Renaissance died out of Italy. Painting became sickly with Guido, meaningless with the eclectics. Literature died away in the sad sweetness of Tasso, and, with Ariosto, ceased to take even itself seriously.

But it was not Italy that supplied the spearhead of the Counter Reformation. It was the fierce and solemn earnestness of Spain, engendered by centuries of struggle with the infidel, that supplied Rome with her best hope of enjoying her own again. The first of the genuine Counter Reformation Popes, the fierce old Neapolitan bigot Paul IV, was indeed fool enough to fight her and knave enough

to seek the aid of the infidel Turk against her. But the silken coercion of that most loyal and dutiful son of the Church, the Duke of Alva, soon brought him to his senses, and henceforth Spain was the sword arm of Rome. She burned with that sombre and dreadful enthusiasm of the kneeling monk clasping a skull in Zurbaran's masterpiece in the National Gallery. It is not altogether a coincidence that the chief work of her Carmelite mystic, St. John of the Cross, should be called the Dark Night of the Soul. The soul of militant Spain was indeed a dark night of cruelty, of austerity, of superstition, but a night illumined by stars of heroism and saintliness. The last of the Crusades was won at Lepanto by the Spanish King's half-brother, Don John of Austria, and of all the long line of Catholic mystics, none is greater than Santa Theresa.

The man on whom it devolved to become, in effect, the Commander of the Faithful to Rome, was well suited for the part he had to play. Philip of Spain, son of the Emperor Charles V, combined the intellect of an industrious office clerk with the austere fanaticism that causes him still to be remembered in his own country as a great and pious sovereign. He could be perfectly cruel and perfectly treacherous when it suited him, or rather when it served the cause to which his life was devoted. If he could preside at auto-da-fés without turning a hair, he could also bear the most excruciating agony with the constancy of a saint; if he sent the Armada to its doom, he was the only man in Spain who could submit to the stroke of God without murmuring or recrimination. He had so identified himself with the cause of Christ's Church that he became like one of those impersonal forces of nature, blind and slow, but inevitable. And this Philip, just when the Counter Reformation was gaining strength, was called to the throne of Spain, of the Netherlands, of half Italy, and of the new world across the Western Ocean. The conquest of Portugal was to add an Eastern to his Western Empire. Philip did not know that the steady stream of gold, that poured into Spain and was kept there as far as the law could keep it, was raising prices to such an extent as to choke Spanish industry, and thereby pave the reduction of Spain to a third class power; these things were hidden in the future—but that Rome and he should quench the Reformation in blood and fire was a prospect of alarming imminence, and most of all to relapsed England.

Thus the lists were set for an European struggle of deadly intensity. The time was passed for the voice of reason to be heard; it did not occur to men that in matters so vitally affecting their

well-being it would be best to put their heads together in order to find the truth. It did not even occur to them that the final truth about the Universe and its government might be beyond the reach of men who had only lately discovered that the world was round. While Calvin was labouring at his Institutes and the divines at Trent were intriguing and squabbling about what exactly should constitute the living doctrine of the Church, the unseen forces of the universe moved on in their majestic inscrutability. And yet Europe was to be torn asunder, every horror and cruelty enacted that man can devise for man, fair provinces reduced to deserts, and all from the insane delusion that the truth can be advanced one iota because Peter, who happens to think that bread becomes the Prince of Peace, succeeds in spilling the brains of Paul, who merely thinks that the bread symbolizes Him. Such is the logic of human conflict, which those must justify who believe war to be an essential factor of civilization.

2

The Catholic Reaction

The course of England, between the death of the Bluff King and the accession of Elizabeth, may be likened to that of a cyclist who, caught on a turn by a sudden skid, heels over violently to one side, recovers himself by lurching in the opposite direction, and then succeeds in righting himself and proceeding normally along his new road. Edward VI's reign witnessed a premature triumph of Protestantism, that of Mary an uncompromising and cruel reaction, and in neither of these had the nation its heart. The triumph of each cause was effective only to its own undoing. Earnest and sincere reformers allowed themselves to enter into alliance with thieving magnates who plundered the land under pretence of governing it, and to be parties to Northumberland's disreputable plot to put his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, on the throne. It was the gambler's last, desperate throw, and it failed because Englishmen, quite apart from the political and religious merits of the case, sympathized with the cynically wronged Princess Mary as they had sympathized with her mother over the question of the divorce.

As everybody must have foreseen, the accession of this new sovereign meant a complete reversion to the old Papal supremacy from which Henry VIII had been at such pains to free the Church.

The reformers, who had allowed themselves to be associated with the gang of enclosers and pillagers who had lorded it for the last few years, had not made themselves popular enough for this consummation to be particularly regretted. But important political consequences were also involved. Mary was half a Spaniard by birth and—in spite of her cousin, the Emperor's, sage advice to her to go slow and be a good Englishwoman—strongly Spanish by sympathy. Her accession therefore involved an immediate change from a pro-French to a pro-Spanish orientation of policy. In the year following her accession she sealed this alliance by marrying Charles's son, Philip, who shortly afterwards succeeded to the whole of his vast Empire, with the exception of Germany.

Now was seen a strange phenomenon which should provide food for thought for believers in a Machiavellian or Bismarckian diplomacy. To all appearance the two great powers, France and Spain, had gained the most brilliant of diplomatic triumphs in bringing Scotland and England respectively so completely under their influence. The King of France had actually talked of Scotland as if she were not an ally but a vassal, and even so able a modern diplomatic historian as Seeley has written as if England had become part of the Hapsburg Empire, like the Netherlands. As a matter of fact the Continental dynasts had left out of their reckoning the strength of national sentiment, which reacted so strongly against even the semblance of foreign domination, that the traditional Franco-Scottish alliance was finally dissolved, and the English friendship with Spain changed to mortal enmity.

The Spanish marriage was thoroughly unpopular, and even before it was concluded, a revolt, led by Sir Thomas Wyatt, came within an ace of turning Mary off the throne. Philip was not allowed to exercise any regal authority or to land a single Spanish soldier in England. Nevertheless England got dragged, in the wake of Spain, into a war with France, and after having assisted her ally to win a great victory at St. Quentin, sustained what seemed to every Englishman a shattering disaster—it was really a blessing in disguise—in the loss of Calais. This was a humilation great enough to bury in oblivion the worst ineptitudes of Edward VI's lords.

While Mary's pro-Spanish policy was bringing lasting discredit upon her rule, the savage persecution with which she attempted to stamp out Protestantism was arousing a hatred against her which has crystallized in the epithet " bloody ". It is at least arguable that the Saviour of the Protestant cause in England was this sour

but not ignoble old maid, whose affection for her mother made her cling, with passionate obstinacy, to her mother's Church, and whose mother's wrongs were burned so deeply into her soul as to drive her to an act of such stupid cruelty as forcing a martyr's crown upon the seven times recanting Cranmer.

Historians and controversalists of a modern Catholic revival have protested vehemently against the accusation of blood-guiltiness that has attached itself to the very name of Mary. Her sister, Elizabeth, they argue, was just as bad, or worse, in her treatment of Catholics, of the priests and Jesuits who were hanged, drawn and quartered under her auspices. To talk thus is to miss the whole point of the difference between executing a Jesuit at Tyburn and burning a heretic at Smithfields. The former, however horrible, was in spirit and intention an act of self-defence. When the Queen, on whom everything depended, was leading a charmed life and in daily peril of assassination, when Catholics within and without the realm were conspiring, with every prospect of success, for its destruction, it would be too much to expect of human nature for it always to temper with mercy the justice of what was practically a state of siege. But Mary's persecution was something to strike the naturally kindly and easy-going English temperament as cruel and vindictive. It is quite true that the deaths of a few isolated heretics like anabaptists, or even protestants in Henry VIII's day, failed to impress the popular imagination, but under Mary everything was done to enhance the horror of burnings whose number might have seemed impiously scanty to the mighty persecutors of the Continent.

The very conspicuousness of some of the victims, the humble circumstances of others, the steadfastness of all but one, made their sufferings impressive, and their heroism, often heightened by little intimate touches of pathos—" blessed be God I am even at home "—left an unforgettable and, even at this day, unforgotten impression. The one exception to the general heroic standard, that of poor, vacillating Cranmer, probably had a more disastrous effect on the Roman cause than any other martyrdom. A rugged constancy like that of staunch Latimer or zealous Hooper has fewer bonds of sympathy with ordinary human nature than the tardy resolution of a weak old man to thrust into the fire the hand which had sinned against the truth, " for fear of death, to save my life if it might be." Mary and her advisers, in burning Cranmer after his recantation, had not been playing the game. What still further damaged the cause of Rome was that both the stronghold of

Protestantism and the headquarters of persecution was in London, which in those days of imperfect communications might almost have been described as the mind of the Kingdom.

Certain it is that the fires of Smithfield burned so deeply into the national consciousness as to create a horror of Roman domination in the most intelligent parts of the Kingdom, the like of which had certainly not existed in Edward VI's day, and, what is more, to blacken out of the memory such accompaniments of the Reformation as the great share-out. The English temperament is not, like the Spanish, capable of taking an austere delight in auto-da-fés; brutal it may sometimes be, but it has no taste for sustained cruelty, and it was with an accumulating horror that Englishmen watched the proceedings of men like Bonner, the persecuting Bishop of London.

> "When two men and a sister dear
> At Beccles were consumed to dust,
> When William Sleche, constant and clear,
> In prison died with hope and trust,
> When these, our brethren, were put to death
> We wished for our Elizabeth."

It is from the crude monotony of this Register of Martyrs that we gain the truest impression of how the minds of ordinary folk were affected by repeated spectacles of torture, culminating in the supreme horror, paralleled only in the records of American lynching, of a woman giving birth to a child in the flames. There is no record of any such revulsion from the severities practised under Elizabeth.

Indeed, there is no aspect of the English Reformation so distinctive as the minor part played therein by purely religious motives. However excited zealous divines might become about such matters as transubstantiation, the general body of the people seems to have desired nothing better than to be "godly and quietly governed". They allowed themselves, with astonishing ease, to be transferred from papal to royal supremacy and thence onwards to advanced Protestantism, back into the fold of Rome and thence again to a more modified Protestantism. The seeds of Calvinism had indeed been planted, but they would require a long time to come to maturity on the tough soil of the English mind. The ordinary John Bull of that time was content with any reasonably efficient religion; what he did know and really care about was that he was not going to have Spaniards or other foreigners interfering with his concerns, that he was sick of Smithfield burnings and furious at having lost Calais, and that above all other things he dreaded the prospect of a civil strife complicated by foreign intervention.

3

The Elizabethan Settlement

Scarcely at any time in our history have things looked so dark and desperate as when Mary's death placed on the throne her half-sister Elizabeth. The Counter Reformation was just beginning to gather strength; the great Catholic family of Guise were coming to sway the affairs of France, a daughter of their house was regent of Scotland, supported by an army of French veterans, and the Franco-Scottish alliance was thus revived in its most dangerous form. Philip himself, lately King by marriage of a now apostate realm, was in Flanders at the head of a large and victorious army. The national defences on land and sea were in a state of chaos, and worst of all, no one knew whether half or more than half of Elizabeth's subjects would not join hands with any invader who should offer to set up Popery.

The need of the hour was to get some settled form of religion, which should unite as large a proportion of Englishmen as possible, and then to see that this form was respected, if not for the sake of the eternal welfare at least for the temporal salvation of the country. Never was woman more thoroughly wrapped up in the affairs of this world than our good Queen Bess. She was her father's daughter and a true child of the Renaissance in her temperamental leaning towards the colour and pomp of the old worship; she had a natural antipathy for earnest enthusiasts like Grindal, her second Archbishop, who shewed an indiscreet sympathy for "prophesyings", and lost his post in consequence. But whatever religious leanings Elizabeth may or may not have had, her determination was fixed to be supreme head of her own Church and State, and to tolerate no interference whatever from the Pope without or zealots within her realm.

The Archbishop chosen by her to succeed Pole, whom Mary had appointed to Cranmer's vacant archbishopric and who most obligingly accompanied his mistress out of the world, was a man after her own heart. Matthew Parker, master of Corpus and Dean of Lincoln, was by no means of the stuff of which martyrs are made, having kept carefully out of harm's way during Mary's persecution. No more appropriate man could have been found for establishing the Anglican settlement; his very face, with its broad commonsense and sober kindliness is reminiscent of many a right-reverend man of this world and the next who has, since his day, donned lawn sleeves at the behest of the State. He was, in fact, a thorough Anglican,

a man of no marked religious enthusiasm but, in the best sense of the word, a gentleman. He was also, as befits a don of his University, a notable scholar and antiquary; it is him that we have to thank for the rescue of many a monastic document that would otherwise have perished. His letters to Lord Burleigh, a kindred spirit and his constant friend, are full of charm. "Experience doth teach," he writes, in reference to some noisy Puritans who have been "cocking abroad" and wanting to pull down fonts, "the world is much given to innovations, never content to stay and live well." To stay, and live well was the end of Parker's desire as far as the Church of England was concerned.

The settlement, under such auspices and with such aims as those of Parker, Burleigh and Elizabeth, was bound to result in a compromise as illogical as the English temperament. The articles and prayer book of Edward VI were taken as a basis, in preference to reconstructing the whole fabric of belief, but the rough edges were conveniently smoothed away and the controversial points involved in a wise obscurity. The very fact that few have ever wanted to read or need scruple to sign the thirty-nine articles is perhaps their chief merit. At a time when different kinds of religious enthusiasts were cutting each others' throats and burning each other all over Europe, there was a good deal to be said in favour of a Laodicean attitude. Men whose Protestantism is less a faith than a convenience have not enough interest in points of dogma to apply torch to faggot more often than absolutely necessary. The Catholic who liked to keep quiet and abstain from the House of Rimmon, in the shape of his parish church, was in danger neither of the stake nor the gowk's stool, though he might have to contribute a shilling a week to the poor box, no unreasonable payment, as some might think, for escaping one of the prescribed and ample homilies.

The great and earnest reformers of Edward VI's reign had mostly perished; the Church of Elizabeth's early years is conspicuous for its absence of striking personalities. The most considerable work in its defence is Bishop Jewel's Apology, a respectable and unusually well-mannered production, citing voluminous testimony of early Fathers against Popish practice, but touching on no broad, general principle—the type of book that is bought cheap at an auction to fill the shelves of some clergyman's library, there to repose in portentous but unbroken peace. The judicious Hooker was not yet, and Hooker, when he did come, provided the Church with a classic more in harmony with this world than the next. But the early

reformers had not worked in vain. Tyndale had already laid the foundations of that monument of the English tongue, the Authorized Bible, and the hand that penitent Cranmer held steady in the flames had penned the hardly inferior prose of our Book of Common Prayer.

4

Scotland Before the Reformation

Our last glance at Scotland was on the recovery of her independence, and the outburst of patriotic enthusiasm that supplied Wallace with an army and Barbour with the theme for an epic. Since that time her history had been a chequered one, and there was scant revival of the prosperity that had been hers under her Alexanders of the thirteenth century. The conditions were too hard for the growth of peaceful civilization. England, though not strong enough to conquer, was nevertheless capable of inflicting enough annoyance and misery to paralyze her development. Bannockburn was an exceptional victory over a disunited nation and an incompetent commander, but as a rule, even when at war with France, England was capable of putting an army into the field that was more than a match for her neighbour, a fact sufficiently demonstrated by the victories of Halidon Hill, Neville's Cross, Homildon, Flodden and Pinkie. The fertile strip of East Coast, along which now run the expresses from King's Cross to Aberdeen and which was naturally the most prosperous part of the country, was thus exposed to English invasion from the days of Edward I to those of the Butcher Cumberland. It is too characteristic of English methods, that during one of the most savage of these expeditions, with the strange object of wooing the infant Queen of Scots for Edward VI, the murder and looting were accompanied by the distribution of cartloads of Bibles.

These invasions in force, though sufficient to put back the clock of civilization for many a decade, were comparatively few and far between. But the trouble on the Border was never-ceasing, and what was practically a permanent state of irregular and private frontier war, combined with indiscriminate looting and blackmail, continued for centuries. This was bad enough for England; the Northern counties were the most backward, and the Northern lords the most powerful and rebellious, the Northumberland Percies,

in their own territory, being like little kings. But the Border was a long way from London and the vital Southern and East-Anglian counties. It was far otherwise with the Lowlands, where Edinburgh itself was in striking distance from the Tweed, and where the great Lowland Houses, which the very necessities of their own and the nation's defence rendered strong, were able to overawe the Crown. The atmosphere generated by Border war may have been the soul of romance, but it was the bane of good government. In Border minstrelsy the note that recurs with a reiteration almost monotonous is one of dark and sombre treachery, Clerk Sanders murdered asleep, Burd Helen shot in her lover's arms, Edom of Gordon firing the house of Rhodes and catching an escaping child on the point of his spear. It is notable to what an extent the atmosphere of these ballads pervades Scottish history. Kings murdering nobles, nobles murdering Kings, blood-feuds, treason—of these the History of Scotland is full, though we must not forget the redeeming instances of romantic loyalty which the very name of Stuart seems to arouse, of indomitable patriotism, as of Wallace's columns of Falkirk, and of the Scottish spearmen, who, at Flodden,

> "Still made good
> Their dark, impenetrable wood,
> Each stepping where his comrade fell."

But as if it were not enough for Scotland to have one Border, she had also, on the North, the menace of the well-nigh impenetrable Highlands, with their practically independent clans, the facilities they offered for the retirement of any temporarily unsuccessful rebel, and the menace they presented to the towns within their reach, such as Inverness, which was burnt twice. It was out of the Highlands that Sir Robert Graeme, with his three hundred spears, descended in the night upon the sleeping castle of Perth, to murder James I, "a poet true and a friend of man," the first King of a tragic line. How little love there was lost between Highlander and Lowlander may be seen from Dunbar's gruesome description of Hell, where the Devil, after having amused himself with a dance of the Seven Deadly Sins, concludes the entertainment by a pageant of Highlanders, who emit such a hideous yell that His Majesty is fain to stifle them all in smoke.

It is not surprising that under these circumstances Scotland remained, in comparison with England, a poor and backward country. Poverty was, in fact, the consistent though not very generous taunt with which Englishmen were accustomed to twit the

Scots down to the days of Samuel Johnson. Towns like Glasgow and Aberdeen were little better than glorified villages of a few thousand inhabitants, and Edinburgh itself did not, in the fourteenth century, include more than some sixteen thousand, whose wretched mode of life astonished their French allies. The industrial arts were slow to take root on Scottish soil, and the wealthy monopolists of the gilds merchant were successful in enforcing a policy of free imports and burghal privilege that did little to protect the native craftsman. The export trade, except for a rough and inferior home-spun cloth, was almost entirely in raw materials.

Constitutional development on English lines was a thing almost impossible in medieval Scotland. The Lowland Scot was not, indeed, like the Irish and Welsh Celt, cursed with a natural inability to unite with his countrymen for political ends—the reformed Kirk was to afford proof enough of his capacity—but the poverty of the country and the perpetual danger from South and North helped to keep alive the worst evils of feudalism. The necessity for the protecting hand of a local lord was keenly felt when any night might be lit with the flames of homesteads and byres. It was a well-nigh hopeless undertaking for a sovereign to make permanent head against subjects, a single one of whom might, like the Douglas, be as strong as himself, and two or three of whom might, in combination, be overwhelmingly stronger.

Thus the blessing that the Normans and Plantagenets had conferred upon England, a strong central government, was denied to Scotland. Her great lords were little less powerful than our own "devils and wicked men" of Stephen's reign. The right of "pit and gallows", of hanging men and drowning women, was freely exercised, if we may judge by the grim evidence of bones. How great was the power exercised by these petty tyrants may be gauged from an incident that took place so late as 1693, in what was supposed to be a polite and cultured age, when Lindsay of Dunrode, who was playing on the ice, and had been annoyed at some trifling lapse on the part of a retainer, had a hole knocked in the ice and the poor man drowned then and there. What justice could be expected when a border ruffian like Bothwell, who murdered Queen Mary's second husband in order to become her third, could come to a court of justice attended by thousands of armed men?

The history of the first five Jameses is one long record of able, though not always scrupulous men struggling with an impossible situation. As the life of a Scottish King was cut short with unfailing

regularity, the situation was rendered still worse by a series of minorities, during which the nobles were able to do more or less as they pleased. English institutions, though the Scots were wise enough to adopt them, at least, in form, started with a fatal handicap. There was a Scottish Parliament, which never progressed beyond the stage of being an assembly of the three separate estates, as on the Continent, and not a judicious blending of them, as in England. The result was the adoption of a system which, when Richard II had tried it in England, had brought about a revolution. Parliament delegated its powers to a committee, called the Lords of the Articles, and was often little better than a voting machine for registering their decisions. Where there is no unquestioned national sovereignty, there is no scope for Parliamentary government, and sovereignty in Scotland was vague and fitful at the best.

English law, which was the true basis of the English constitution, struck few roots in Scotland. It was fully established in the fourteenth century and continued with little change to the beginning of the sixteenth, but the means of enforcing it were lacking, and such an institution as the jury was capable of being reduced to a farce by the power of a great nobleman. The Year Books and Inns of Court, which lent such toughness to English law, were lacking in Scotland—there was no great vested interest of common lawyers, no Scottish Littleton or Fortescue. It therefore came to pass that when the flood of Roman law swept over Europe at the Renaissance, the Scottish Common Law was submerged. The decisive moment was when James V, by the advice of Lord Chancellor Dunbar, determined to centralize the administration of justice and overcome some of the worst evils of private jurisdiction. With this object he set up the Court of Session, of seven clerical and seven lay judges, with a clerical President. The interest of the sovereign and the traditions of the Roman Church were sufficient to ensure the law administered by this court being Roman and not English, and the intimate connection between France and Scotland helped to keep it so. Colleges were founded at Paris, where Scotsmen could become expert in a law whose dictates were regarded as little inferior to those of reason itself. Nevertheless, we have Maitland's authority for doubting whether Roman law made the complete conquest of Scotland it did of Germany.

If the power of Parliament and the Crown was small, that of the Church was enormous. It has been pointed out, with perfect correctness, by Buckle, that the very scenery of Scotland lends itself power-

fully to the growth of superstition, or, as we should prefer to phrase it, to a belief in the supernatural. The gloomy skies, the sudden storms sweeping through the mountains and across the lochs, the sombre grandeur of the granite peaks and the vast expanses of barren moorland, create almost inevitably a belief in eerie and sinister presences. The genius of Shakespeare was never more convincingly displayed than when he scarcely permitted the light of day to shine on his tragedy of Forres. It has been noted by Mr. Yeats that the gentle fairy presences which haunt the imagination of his countrymen became formidable and evil so soon as they are transferred to Scottish soil. One has only to stand in the pass of Glencoe, and then think of the Wicklow Mountains, to know the reason why. With poverty and constant peril the life of this world must have seemed dismal enough to the medieval Scot, and his tendency would be to lay up for himself treasures in the world to come.

The Church, from these or other causes, came to be immensely wealthy, and was usually in alliance with the Crown against the power of the magnates. Unfortunately, the corruption of religion that swept over all Europe at the Renaissance entirely pervaded her, and by the beginning of the fifteenth century she was even more dead to religion than her sister of England. Immorality and worldliness were rife among her priests and monks, and there was no redeeming heroism or saintliness like that displayed by More, Fisher and the Charterhouse martyrs. Never did Church fall more tamely and less regretted than the Roman Church of Scotland. She was, in fact, at last little better than an engine of oppression—Sir David Lyndsay, in a famous play or masque, describes how an honest man is reduced to poverty because when his two old parents die, two good Ayrshire cows are taken by the vicar, not to speak of the grey mare seized by the landlord, and how, when his wife dies with the grief of this, the insatiable vicar has the third remaining cow, and takes the dead woman's uppermost blanket to give to his clerk. The life of the poor must have been hard enough, though it is fair to say that villeinage was abolished in Scotland fully two centuries before it was abolished in England, and a system of short leases was made habitual, which removed any incentive for the cultivator to improve the land.

For one brief period it seemed as if the Renaissance were going to bring light and prosperity to Scotland. This was during the reign of James IV, an able and accomplished Prince, who seemed in a fair way towards bringing his realm into order and established a brilliant court, upon some of whose poets the spirit of Chaucer seemed

to have descended, more than upon the worthy Lydgates and Hoccleves who strove to keep it alive in England. A spring-tide of joyousness broke for a moment over Scotland, and we have the testimony of the Spanish ambassador, Ayala, to a certain rude but increasing prosperity. Above all, what has always been the noblest feature of the Scottish character, the zeal for education, was conspicuous under James IV's auspices, as befitted the time and the man. Scottish scholars thronged to Paris, and for those who could not afford the journey there were no less than three Scottish universities. In 1496, Parliament enacted a comprehensive scheme of compulsory grammar school and university education for the sons of gentlefolk. Unfortunately the Southern enemy proved too strong, and the disaster of Flodden cut short the hopes of a Scottish Renaissance. The usual minority followed, and the merry Scotland of James IV and the poet Dunbar

"Reeled back into the beast and was no more".

5

The Scottish Reformation

When Scottish patriotism triumphed gloriously at Bannockburn, the country had, in fact, been committed to a hostility against England, which was, in the long run, bound to be a source of danger to the stronger and of positive ruin to the weaker country. Union, though in the form of a free and honourable partnership, was necessary for both, and this had been retarded by Edward I's fatal attempt to substitute conquest. This had the effect of driving Scotland, until the middle of the sixteenth century, into political and economic alliance with England's enemy, France. The rugged independence which, despite feudal tyranny, continued to be the basis of Scottish character, resented the least thought of domination by a neighbour who was known only as a remorseless and cruel foe, on the look out for any chance, if not of conquering, at least of plaguing and paralyzing the country. Thus the stubborn patriotism that informs the lays of Barbour and Blind Harry was never suffered to die, except among those unworthy magnates who did not scruple to advance their private ends by intriguing with England. It broke the heart of James V when the army of Scotland, owing to the lukewarmness of its leaders, ran away in panic from a handful of English cavalry at Solway Moss.

After the catastrophe of Flodden, the idea of union with England became increasingly rife on both sides of the Border. Henry VIII, with his imperial dreams, would dearly have loved to add Scotland to his dominions as he had finally incorporated Wales and as he thought he had subdued Ireland. Unfortunately, his idea of attaining this end was in harmony with the precepts of Machiavellianism, interpreted in its basest sense, and herein he displayed less good sense than his prosaic father, who had tried to break up the Franco-Scottish alliance by the peaceful method of marriage. Henry VIII and Somerset after him were determined to enforce their will by violence and treachery. The statesmanlike idea of securing a union of crowns by marrying Edward VI to the little Mary, Queen of Scots, was foiled by the overbearing terms and bullying methods of the English wooing. Of what avail was it to win a brilliant victory, and to carry fire and destruction through the Lowlands, if the object of all these delicate attentions was quietly shipped off to France, eventually to marry the Dauphin ?

As so often happens in foreign policy, the more England succeeded in attaining her immediate objects, the further she was from success in the long run. Such victories as those of Solway Moss and Pinkie Cleugh had only the effect of pulling Scotland together and throwing her into the arms of her ally. Instead of a Union of Crowns, Scotland was under a French regent who maintained order with a small but exceedingly efficient French army. The pendulum now swung the other way, and the success of the French proved fatal to their alliance. The foreign army encamped on their soil was by no means popular with the Scots, and patriotism was diverted against the French. The growing party in favour of the Reformation now began to seek English support against the triumphant alliance of France and Rome, when England at last made up her mind to stand, with whatever qualifications, for the Protestant cause. It was therefore a masterstroke of Elizabeth to cut the knot that the Scottish reformers could not untie, by marching an army to take the French headquarters at Leith. It was an inefficient army compared with those that had won Flodden and Pinkie ; it went about its military task in the blundering way, but on this occasion the English had come not as conquerors but as friends, and having seen the last French soldier out of the Kingdom they returned, leaving Scotland to work out her own destinies. They had no smashing victory or plundered city to their credit, but they had done more than any English army before them in that they had at last killed the deadly Franco-Scottish

alliance, brought Scotland into line with England in the Reformed cause, and made the union of the two only a matter of time.

The Catholic Church in Scotland, which was propped up by French pikes, collapsed like a house of cards when that support was withdrawn. It commanded neither respect nor affection; the moral force of the country was behind the Preachers, and its material resources with the magnates who, for reasons of their own, saw fit to embrace the Protestant religion. But the version of Protestantism that appealed to the Scot was more consistent and logical than the respectable compromise that Elizabeth and her counsellors set up. The Scottish temperament had, possibly owing to the mixture of the Northumbrian with the Celtic and Pictish stock, taken a markedly intellectual turn, and Erasmus had already remarked how the Scots were wont to pretend that the genius of their native soil made them good disputants. It was only to be expected, then, that they should go all the way with, and even beyond Calvin. It was rendered certain by the rugged and sombre personality of her chief Reformer, John Knox.

Among the English reformers there was no such commanding figure, for Henry VIII may almost be said to have forwarded the Reformation in spite of himself, and the personalities of the Oxford Martyrs and Elizabethan Archbishops seem shadowy in comparison. John Knox was not only a moral enthusiast, but a constructive statesman of a very high order. In the *First Book of Discipline*, which he intended to be the guide for the new reformed Kirk, he adapted the Genevan system of his friend Calvin to the requirements of the Scottish nation. He laid down no rigid and unalterable constitution—there was, in fact, ample room for development—but the foundation was firmly laid in the local congregation electing its minister. There was subsequently to be elaborated a hierarchy of representative bodies, culminating in the General Assembly of the Kirk. The principle on which Knox, and still more his successors, proceeded was democratic in the extreme. Calvin himself had laid it down that the rawest novice in the ministry might, when the spirit moved him, admonish the most venerable. This parity of its ministers was the great principle for which the Kirk was to fight against the attempts of the Crown to set up an ecclesiastical Toryism under a Bench of Bishops.

But equality, which is the true principle of democracy, is often in direct opposition to liberty. So it came about that the Scottish Kirk, though one of the most consistent democracies, was also one

of the most thorough tyrannies the world has seen. A minute and all-pervading discipline was established over every department and relation of life. The Kirk was about the path of each individual and about his bed, spying out all his ways. Even the most sacred intimacies of domestic life were not exempt from the prurient questionings of its elders and ministers. No more than its decencies was the dignity of human life respected—the gowk's stool was one of the ways of humiliating anyone whose way of life displeased the corporate old maid called the Kirk of God. The joy that had seemed to be breaking over the land was extinguished under a deliberately fostered gloom. To be happy was an offence against what the Kirk called God; a long and bilious countenance was in itself a sign of grace. The plays, that the Scottish Renaissance had allowed even in Hell, were too great a relaxation for a Calvinistic world, and the holidays and saints' days, which had done something to enliven the tedium of a worker's life, ceased to be. The only substitute for toil was Divine Service, a holy horror, from which there was no escape. Sometimes the wretched worshipper might be treated to twelve hours in the course of a day; preachers were valued by the length to which they might be inspired to sermonize—one doughty champion actually succeeded in going on for four hours at a stretch.

Sunday, on which Knox had found Calvin playing bowls with a quiet conscience, was developed towards the close of the century into a day of that blasphemous gloom in the face of Heaven for which Dante had reserved a place in Hell. This remarkable superstition, unknown to the early Reformers, has been one of the most lasting effects of the later Calvinism. It is in harmony with the conception of the universe which depicts God as a malevolent and unjust demon, and man as a creature black with sin and incapable of lifting a finger to help himself in a world which Adam's fall has left about as bad as it can be, and which according to some devout theologians, is going on getting worse and worse.

The tyranny of such a system naturally hardened the heart and engendered the vice of cruelty, often a petty and sneaking cruelty that blighted the life by slow degrees, but sometimes cruelty in a form so blatant that it might have shocked Thugs or Iroquois. The belief in witches had, of course, been part of the Catholic system, and there was persecution under Roman auspices, but never had it attained to such insane and grotesque horror as in the century following the Reformation among certain Protestant communities. Methods of slow and scientific torture were invented to end the days

of women all over Scotland, who were usually old and feeble, and nearly always poor. One devoted woman, from whom the utmost agony could not wring a confession of witchcraft, had her little child tortured before her eyes by these followers of Christ—then she confessed. The extreme emphasis laid on Hell, and even the joy of the elect in the spectacle thereof, are part of the same instinctive cruelty.

All this is horrible to read or to write about, and it must have been infinitely worse to have lived through. Why, one is tempted to ask, could a sturdy and intelligent people have put up with it for a moment? How was it that the sermons were not choked in the nearest pond, and the witch prickers operated upon with their own needles? Nothing of the sort did in fact take place; on the contrary we have every evidence that the people, as a whole, clung to their Kirk with passionate devotion, that they were ready to suffer persecution for it and to die for it, that a King might succeed in dispensing with an English Parliament, but that when he tampered with the Scottish Kirk he was sealing his own doom.

This is partly, no doubt, due to the fact that the desire to tyrannize over others seems often to be a stronger constituent of human nature than the objection to being tyrannized over oneself. It might be that Jock would gladly take his chance of the gowk's stool for the pleasure of seeing Sandy thus enthroned. There might be disadvantages in having one's own affairs pried into, but after all one was a member of a community which pried into everybody else's affairs.

Then, again, the state of elect holiness after which every devout Puritan aspires, unlovely as it may seem to us, may well be worth the sacrifice of the whole world for him. To be united to God through grace, to be washed in Christ's blood and cleansed from all sin, was an ideal that could at least be consistently defended. The world and its pleasures, some devout preacher might say, were only renounced in order to attain the peace and inward satisfaction that are far too deep for outward mirth. "True it is," says Knox, "that this weaning—or spaneing, as we term it—from worldly pleasure, is a thing strange to the flesh, and yet it is a thing so necessary to God's children, that unless they are weaned from the pleasures of the world, they can never feed upon that delectable milk of God's eternal verity."

Not the least of Knox's titles to fame is the magnificent scheme of universal education which, improving upon the precedent set by James IV, he sought to make part of his system of Kirk government.

Unfortunately he was never able to put this into practice, nor yet that part of his discipline which was to finance the new ministers out of the property of the old Church. As the nobles too truly gave him to understand, such projects were all "vain imaginings". These pious magnates had not overthrown the Church merely to enjoy the delectable milk of eternal verity, and they had as keen an eye for the ecclesiastical estates, which in Scotland were better managed than their own, as any English Russell or Seymour. As Knox bitterly put it, two thirds of the Church's lands went to the Devil, and the remaining third had to be divided between God and the Devil. To judge by some of the fruits of Calvinism, one might be tempted to doubt whether, under its auspices, there was more than a verbal difference between these two personages.

6

Elizabethan Statecraft

The bold and skilful act of statesmanship that had broken the Franco-Scottish alliance gave Elizabeth a breathing space, but her position was still, and was to be for the next thirty years, one of desperate peril. Hard as had been the task of her father in keeping his realm intact after the severance with Rome, her own was much harder. To any impartial observer of Henry's time it might have seemed that Rome's cause was doomed, with the Papacy itself corrupt and lukewarm and the great Catholic powers only formally concerned in her defence. By the time of Elizabeth's accession the Counter Reformation was a mighty and rising force; the Church had risen from her ashes and glowed with an ardour and majesty worthy of her palmiest days. Catholic Europe was drawing together, the House of Guise was bringing France into line with Spain, the possibility of playing off Hapsburg against Valois, which had been the trump card of Henry VIII, could no longer be counted upon by an England dispirited, ill-defended and almost bankrupt.

From such a situation the country could only be saved by a statesmanship of extraordinary ability, and one that was practically immune from mistakes. It is one of the blessings for which those who believe in a special providence should be most thankful that the hour brought forth the woman, perhaps the only woman in all history who could have pulled the country through. And yet Elizabeth was not, as many of her subjects thought her, a heaven-descended

goddess, but the last of the Tudors, fully seised of the family tradition, and applying the principles of her father and grandfather with at least equal ability and without their errors and eccentricities. This should be steadily kept in view in any estimate of her character as a Queen. She was, moreover, perhaps the only female sovereign who has, at all times, been completely her own mistress, able to keep her favourites, like Leicester and Essex, in due subordination, and to impose her independent will upon the deliberations of her wisest counsellors.

She was, like all her family, and unlike some of the otherwise most capable sovereigns of history, an excellent judge of men. With the solitary exception of her wanting to pit the military ability of Leicester against that of Parma, she seems to have had an almost uncanny faculty of getting the right man into the right place. The Council in her reign was at its zenith of power and ability, and of the Council the dominating wisdom was that of William Cecil, Lord Burleigh, and, after his death, of his son Robert. How multifarious were its activities and how strangely modern its methods can best be realized by a perusal of the State Papers or the enormous collection of documents preserved at Hatfield House. Space does not permit us the fascinating task of following these activities even in the scantiest detail; we must devote our attention to the principles that inspired Her Majesty and her advisers at this most critical period of our history, and to the broad outlines of their policy.

The most important consideration of all in the mind of Elizabeth Tudor was that of husbanding her resources. Upon this, as she understood as well as any of her family, her power depended, and she had to face greater difficulties than any other monarch of her line. For the restoration of the coinage, with which she began her reign, did not bring the expected fall in prices. She had to contend against the cheapening of money that resulted from the stream of precious metals flowing into Europe by way of the Spanish Peninsula. And yet so great was her forbearance from expensive adventures, that until the very last years of her reign she contrived to keep her Parliament at arm's length and her people contented. Those who talk about Elizabeth's meanness should bear in mind that a policy of strict retrenchment was absolutely forced upon her, and pursued deliberately and with consummate success. She was not the mere miser that her grandfather—not altogether justly—is supposed to have been; when occasion demanded she could strike well and hard, as at Leith and against the Armada, for at the decisive sea-fight

off Gravelines it was the Spaniards and not the English who were short of ammunition. The legend of her having starved her fleet is now exploded; it was the difficulty of transport and not the Queen's parsimony that kept them short. She had mastered the hard truth that in matters of foreign policy it is better, in nine cases out of ten, to sit still than to do the brilliant thing.

But Elizabeth and her advisers were wise enough not to stop short at a merely negative economy. They made it their aim not only to avoid squandering but positively to increase the national resources. The way had been pointed out clearly enough by Hales, through the mouth of his shrewd old Doctor Pandotheus, who advised his companions in the tavern that the best way to pull the nation out of the ruts was to restore the coinage and to foster native industry. Burleigh was the doctor come to life, and he pursued this policy with unremitting zeal and entire incorruptibility, in which he set an example that was unhappily lost on an even greater than he, Francis Bacon. Burleigh was typically English in his avoidance of abstract theorizing; it would be difficult to label him with any political or economic doctrine, unless we are to call him a moderate protectionist in days when every statesman was, to some extent, a protectionist. It was his way, as his correspondence proves, to deal with each question on its merits and as it arose.

His task and that of his colleagues was one of reconstruction. The medieval system had broken down; feudalism had become a mere pageant; the gilds were monopolies that stood in the way; the Church had become a State department; capitalist enterprise had brought in its train an unemployed surplus in the labour market. The task of the government was to carry on the work of previous reigns by substituting a national for a local economy. With this object a statute was passed in which the State took over the work of the gilds in regulating the conditions of apprenticeship, and provided for the fixing of a fair wage by its local representatives, the Justices of the Peace. About the effect of this measure there has been endless controversy. It was, certainly, no more in theory than the application of the old medieval doctrine of a fair price, to which Piers Plowman and, before him, Thomas Aquinas had subscribed, nor is there any reason to doubt the goodwill of the Council to effect an honest settlement. But it argues too rosy a view of human nature to imagine that in a dispute about wages any impartial settlement can be obtained by the decision of an employers' committee, which is what the Bench of Justices really amounted to.

The general consensus of opinion, in the very difficult matter of estimating real wages, is that these never recovered from the drop that took place at the time of the Reformation. Perhaps the most authoritative evidence is that of shrewd Parson Harrison, whose survey, taken about the middle of the reign, leaves us with the impression that while what we might describe as the Lower Middle Class, the yeomen and small farmers, were raising their standard of comfort, labouring men were hard put to it to provide themselves with bread, and that unemployment was so rampant that evicted paupers had the choice between emigration and thieving. Nevertheless it must be said on the other side that the most common complaint against the Justices was their failing to put the Statute into force.

Elizabeth and her Council were after all not planning a Utopia, but dealing from hour to hour with a situation that might at any time become catastrophic. To their mind's eye there must often have appeared the towering galleons of Philip, the gaunt face and lean beard of Alva, the swords of Saint Bartholomew's Eve, the ghastly fires of the Inquisition. The marvel is what they did, and not what they failed to do under circumstances so desperately adverse. They worked out a solution of their problem which, if it failed to check the operation of social forces in whose grip we, of the twentieth century, are still blindly struggling, did at least bring the country to a glorious issue from her foreign perils, establish her definitely as a great industrial and trading power, pave the union of Great Britain, and start the country on her career of expansion. In the social sphere they set up a well-considered and working order, that left the country in a state at least far better than that which had obtained in the beginning of the reign.

The great Statute of Apprentices to which we have already referred, and the two making the relief of the poor compulsory and national, were only the most conspicuous landmarks in a policy that proceeded by means of minute and ever changing expedients. The government of Elizabeth was no longer content that England should confine her main energies to exporting new materials in foreign ships for foreigners to work up. Every possible means was taken towards the planting of new industries, both indirectly by a tariff so arranged as to encourage native production, and directly by the judicious grant of patents. This, indeed, was a conspicuous feature of Elizabethan policy, and has been a good deal misunderstood. She and her advisers had grasped the fact that if you are to have

successful industries, you must attract capital into them, and that if a man is going to adventure his wealth in making a new departure in business, he must have some security for the enjoyment of its fruits. These patents or monopolies were granted at first with a discriminating hand and after careful consideration both of their immediate and ultimate effects, but the opportunities for driving a corrupt bargain with the State were too obvious to escape the notice of the *nouveaux riches* who had sprung up as thick as weeds after the Reformation. The thing became a national scandal, and raised at last a parliamentary storm of such violence that the wise old Queen, now near the end of her reign, saw the expediency of a graceful surrender.

Not the least important factor in this policy was the encouragement given to the foreign Protestants whom the Counter Reformation was driving to seek refuge on our shores, and who came, bringing with them their trade secrets, which the Council were quick to exploit for the benefit of their fellow countrymen. The problem of overcoming local prejudice against the new settlers was one of considerable delicacy. There were also aliens of a less desirable sort as we may see from the records of the Borough and Corporation of what was then the flourishing seaport of Rye, one of the gates of the Kingdom. The fact that the Bishop is ordered to exercise a religious and to assist the corporation in the temporal supervision of these strangers, throws a curious sidelight on the position of Bishops in the Elizabethan state system, and also goes to show how largely the alien problem was one of religion.

Commerce as well as industry was an object of solicitude. Burleigh had all along been opposed to the privileged position of the Teutonic Hanse League, that absorbed so large a part of our carrying trade, but it was necessary to go warily, because our navy was dependent upon them both for ships and armament. However, thanks to the exertions of men like Sir John Hawkins, the nation became gradually capable of supplying its own naval requirements, and the Jesus of Lubeck was the last German-built ship. Our merchant adventurers, after the ruin of Antwerp, were driven to seek depots in Germany, and were soon competing with the Hansards in their own markets. This roused the Germans to desperate retaliation, and the effete resources of the Empire were actually brought into play, but England was now more than able to hold her own, and the contest ended in the Hansards being turned bag and baggage out of the London

Steelyard they had occupied for so long. When James I allowed them to come back, it was without their time-honoured privileges.

Indeed England had no longer any need of a carrier, for she was taking to what was henceforth to be her element, the sea. The providential loss of Calais was forcing upon her the realization that she was not a continental but a world power. The merchant adventurers were reinforced by the great regulated companies that pushed England's trade in every quarter of the globe. The policy of the government was to keep a light hand over these companies, to prevent them from becoming closed monopolies, and to foster in every way the spirit of individual enterprise. Never in their endeavours after national wealth did Burleigh and Elizabeth forget the prior claims of national defence. Indeed it is one of their chief titles to fame that, however varied the expedients they adopted, the ends of their policy were conceived on simple and comprehensive lines and were steadily held in view.

They may claim the credit of having found England at the nadir of her fortunes, and left her at their zenith. When Elizabeth died England was not only a victorious but fast becoming a wealthy nation, and her wealth, being on a sound basis of national production, was likely to go on increasing. At last she bade fair to rival the Low Countries themselves as a manufacturer of cloth ; the finer processes of manufacture were now mastered and alum workers had been smuggled out of the Pope's mines to put the finishing touches. Her shores were inviolate and not seriously threatened ; her merchant navy was only rivalled by that of Holland. Of her intellectual and spiritual development we have yet to speak. And if beneath the surface there was the canker of social injustice, if the growing puritan fervor was making demands that Renaissance worldliness could never satisfy, let us at least give our great Queen and her councillors the credit of having accomplished all that could be humanly expected of mortals endowed with less than superhuman prescience and insight. They had their faults and they were many ; it is easy to expatiate on the vanity of Elizabeth, the unheroic suppleness of Burleigh, the Machiavellian craft of Walsingham, but where so much was admirable and so much accomplished, any generous Englishman may well be content and sink his criticism in praise to whatever gods he owns for famous men and our fathers that begat us, not forgetting the virgin Queen they served with such a loyal wisdom.

7

Law and Degree

It is essential to our understanding of Elizabethan statecraft to realize how far it was from embodying any simple or consistent theory. What consistency there is about Elizabeth's government is one of spirit and not of doctrine. She herself was as impatient of opposition as any other Tudor, and the most cavalier of any of them with her Parliaments, and yet she was, and made it her pride to be, a monarch whose throne was buttressed upon the consent and love of her people. "Let tyrants fear," was her calm vaunt as she rode along their ranks at Tilbury. "I have always so behaved myself that under God I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal heart and goodwill of my subjects." Self-willed woman though she was, she never dreamed of placing herself above the law nor of allowing herself to be drawn into a constitutional struggle. When it was a question of giving way, she was quick to see the necessity and made a grace of it.

Certainly, until the great debate upon monopolies at the end of her reign, there was never a sovereign of her line, not even Henry VIII, who succeeded in imposing his will with so little real opposition. This was no doubt largely due to the tact that Elizabeth displayed in harmonizing her own will with that of the nation. Moreover she had mastered the Tudor secret of never asking for a penny more than was absolutely necessary. There is a third reason that is perhaps less obvious, which is that at the beginning of her reign the Common Law was only just rising from the trough of its greatest depression. The new feeling of continuity with the past, which was part of a rising patriotism, was making Englishmen gradually more alive to the excellence of their ancient law, and in proportion to this awareness does the sensitiveness of Parliament to its privileges increase. Sir Thomas Smith, the doughty champion of English law, also maintains the high and absolute power of the Court of Parliament.

So far as we can attach a label of any kind to the Elizabethan conception of government, we should call it Tory, in the best sense of that much disputed word. It reposed upon the ideas of law, of duty and of degree. It is safe to say that Elizabeth regarded herself as the maintainer of the law, while she would probably not have taken kindly the compliment that she was a champion of liberty. No Tudor sovereign ever doubted for a moment that his

or her power was limited by the law; even Mary had promptly consigned to the flames a book which propounded the suffragette theory that, being a woman, she was exempt from a man-made law. And it is upon the conception of law that Hooker, the great apologist for the Elizabethan compromise in Church and State, bases his argument. He sees the whole universe subject to the reign of law; God Himself wills to confirm to the law of His own perfection. All His creatures, from the angels down to inanimate matter, are subject to law—and it is the law of reason planted in the heart of man that drives man to take unto himself a government and a positive law of human devising. In short, as Hooker expresses it, the seat of law is the bosom of God, its voice the harmony of the world.

This noble conception of a reign of law, from which God Himself is not exempt, leads the good Hooker to what is, in effect, a rationalist social philosophy. The greater part of his book is, no doubt, taken up with arguments based on Hebrew mythology and the orthodox authorities, but this is the part that the modern reader skips, and the essentials of Hooker's teaching stand out all the more clearly for the omission. Society is based upon reason and the evidence of reason is the "general and perpetual voice of man", which is as the sentence of God Himself. It makes little practical difference whether we say that reason is the sentence of God, or that God is merely a convenient personification of reason. If laws are based upon reason, it is easy to see that they must be based upon consent, "laws they are not which public approbation hath not made so." Mere force or authority is no rational compulsion—"utterly without our consent we could be at no man's commandment living. And to be commanded we do consent, when that society whereof we are part hath at any time before consented, without revoking the same after by the like universal agreement."

This is, of course, the fiction of a social contract, an explanation of society that was coming into vogue at this time, both among the French Huguenots and the Scotch Presbyterians. But the social contract, like evolution in a later age, could mean anything or nothing. It might be used to justify naked despotism, by the interpretation that men have once and for all time committed their destinies into the hands of the sovereign, or it might be understood to mean that the sovereign is merely the servant of the people, and holds his office because, and so long as, they will. The whole question is whether the contract was settled once and for all in the remote past, or whether it needs to be perpetually renewed. Hooker's solution

is a compromise with a considerable bias in favour of the sovereign and of a permanent contract. But like a true Elizabethan he qualifies his doctrine to an extent that is no doubt purposely indefinite. The State is a continuous being; the consent of the forefathers may be taken as that of the children; Hooker owes his allegiance to Elizabeth because his ancestors may be presumed to have freely given theirs to her first predecessor, but what the general consent has done, the general consent can undo. Above the positive law there is always the law of reason, and the very English conclusion seems to emerge that if the State is to be obeyed, it must be decently reasonable, in other words, both sovereign and subjects, apart from the letter of the law, must play the game. This is exactly what the Tudors understood, and the Stuarts did not.

Law, in the Elizabethan conception, is twin brother to order, and order implies every man having his place or degree in society, and faithfully accomplishing his duty therein. This is no new conception, but in Elizabeth's time it is expressed with a fervour and magnificence that raise it to the dignity, almost, of a religion. Everybody knows the magnificent passage in which Shakespeare expresses, through the mouth of Ulysses, the whole spirit and justification of Elizabethan Toryism:—

> "O when degree is shaked,
> Which is the ladder to all high designs,
> The enterprise is sick! How could communities,
> Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
> Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
> The primogenitive and due of birth,
> Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
> But by degree, stand in authentic place?
> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark what discord follows! each thing meets
> In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
> And make a sop of all this solid globe:
> Strength should be lord of imbecility,
> And the rude son should strike his father dead:
> Force should be right; or rather, right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;
> And appetite, a universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce a universal prey,
> And last eat up himself."

The same doctrine is propounded with hardly less eloquence by Spenser, in the fifth book of his Faerie Queene, which treats of

justice, as embodied in the rather priggish and unamiable Artegall, the champion who goes about attended by an iron man called Talus. In the prologue to this book, Spenser attributes the degeneracy of the times to the fact of degree being vizarded, and quaintly remarks that the very signs of the zodiac have shifted from their ancient houses. The most significant passage in Artegall's career is where he engages in debate with a giant who is a complete democrat, and in fact a communist, and who has announced his intention of levelling the mountains with the plain :

> " Tyrants, that make men subject to their law,
> I will suppress, that they no more may reign,
> And lordlings that the commons overawe,
> And all the wealth of rich men to the poor will draw."

The scandalized champion of justice and aristocracy is prompt to enlist the Almighty on the side of things as they are. It is God, he dogmatizes rather than argues, who makes sovereigns powerful and subjects obedient, who makes some wealthy and others poor—what blasphemy is it to oppose His will ! It is a line of thought that has never failed to command pious assent among the possessing classes, and is appropriately clinched by the iron man seizing the poor giant, pitching him off a cliff, and then mercilessly belabouring with his flail a " rascal rout " who have the impudence to demur to this method of settling sociological differences.

The Elizabethan State doctrine is, despite the rationalist standpoint of Hooker, tinged with a lively mysticism. " There is," says Shakespeare,

> " a mystery (with whom relation
> Durst never meddle) in the soul of State ;
> Which hath an operation more divine
> Than breath or pen can give expression to."

This may render intelligible the seemingly ridiculous homage that Elizabeth received from all classes of her subjects, and how, even in her old age, imagination endowed her with perpetual youth and beauty. She was, in fact, less of a woman than a goddess in their eyes, she was Gloriana, England incarnate. There is pathos as well as humour in the story of the little tailor who fell so much in love with his elderly sovereign that he actually died of it. She was one whom her subjects might well delight to honour, and even now a responsive chord may beat in the breasts of some Englishmen to that quaint address :—

> " O, beauteous queen of second Troy
> Accept of our unfeigned joy."

In truth, the love that her people bore for Elizabeth was scarcely to be distinguished from the purest patriotism. It was in her image that they visioned their country. The complete subordination of the Church to the State naturally tended to throw a halo of sanctity around the head of the State and the motherland of which both Church and State were part.

This Toryism of the Elizabethan system might seem not very different from that of Piers Plowman, but the difference, though subtle, is profound. The acid of the Renaissance had destroyed the Christian democracy of the Middle Ages. The Plowman had indeed gone as far as any Elizabethan in recognizing the inequality of men in the State, but this was quite overshadowed by the fact of their equality in the eyes of God. All were equal citizens of one invisible Kingdom which counted for infinitely more than the kingdoms of the earth and the glory thereof. That membership of the Kingdom of Heaven was, to the men of the Renaissance, little better than a pious fiction. The inequality of men was unqualified and fundamental.

Contrast the outlook on life of Chaucer and Shakespeare. Chaucer was certainly at least as much of a courtier as Shakespeare, and he would never have dared to treat sovereigns with the freedom of him who created Claudius and Lear. But the spirit of the age forced him to a practical recognition of human equality. His poor men in the Canterbury Tales are treated with a tenderness and respect by no means inferior to that accorded to the knight and the prioress. Chaucer does indeed view them with the sweet humour that was born in him, but it is in no sense a humour dependent on class distinctions. He does not invent for them contemptuous or ridiculous names simply on account of their lowly station. There is, in his company of pilgrims, no Feeble nor Mouldy nor Wart nor Starveling. The humour of being a Starveling would have been lost upon an age when poverty was sacred, and when it was not profane to represent Christ Himself as a ploughman, or as a labourer surrounded by His tools. It is true that Shakespeare has his Sir Toby Belch and Justice Shallow, but names like these are exceptional for his gentlefolk, and, besides, refer to human and not to class foibles.

This is by no means to belittle Shakespeare's gentle and passionate humanity; the very largeness of his nature makes his imperfect sympathy with democracy all the more remarkable. It is a characteristic that no unprejudiced person can deny. His mobs and his mob-leaders cut a sorry figure; Jack Cade, who is quite

unhistorically endowed with the same opinions as Spenser's democratic giant, is a mere vulgar ruffian, and if Shakespeare ever heard of Magna Charta, his *Life and Death of King John* affords no evidence of it. The ardent kindness of his nature leads him more than once to indignation with the sufferings of poor men, but it is not the indignation that moves the very stones to rise and mutiny. He loves a master who, like Theseus or Brutus, is gracious and condescending to dependents; he loves a servant who, like Adam in *As you like it*, serves his master loyally; but to the idea that Jack is as good as his master, which is Christ's and that of Gothic Christianity, he makes no approach, except in one famous passage which is put into the mouth of the mad Lear. The whole atmosphere of his plays is one of social inequality. So far had the new spirit already gained upon Christianity.

8

The Twilight Years

We are accustomed to speak of the Elizabethan age as if the whole reign were equally fruitful and creative from beginning to end. The fact is that the spirit we know as Elizabethan hardly becomes manifest during the first half of the reign, and only attains to its full glory after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The causes of this are well worth investigation, and afford one of the clearest instances imaginable of the close interdependence of the events of history and the manifestation of creative genius.

Elizabeth's reign divides itself roughly into three periods, the first shading by imperceptible degrees into the second, and the beginning of the third signalized with dramatic clearness by the blow of the axe that severed the neck of Mary Queen of Scots and the invisible bond that had restrained King Philip from launching the full force of his Empire directly at England. We may characterize these three periods of the reign as first that of utter gloom, second that of rampant individualism, and third that of full national self-consciousness.

There could, in fact, have been nothing less Elizabethan, in the usual sense of the word, than the spirit of the country during the first years of the reign, until well on into the seventies. Its mood was of a depression as unrelieved as that which had obtained after the loss of Henry V's conquests in the preceding century.

Henry VIII had indeed given Englishmen reason to be proud of themselves, but after his death nothing had seemed to go right with the country. Under Mary what was, in form at any rate, exceedingly like a Spanish conquest, had taken place, and while English auxiliaries had pulled Philip's chestnuts out of the fire for him at St. Quentin, he had allowed his ally to sustain the cruellest of all her blows on the Continent, in the loss of Calais. It might well seem that the coming of Elizabeth was only a respite. It was almost absurd to imagine that the little Kingdom, but imperfectly united within itself, could permanently sustain the upgathered might of the Counter Reformation. The Queen and her statesmen, playing coolly and unostentatiously for safety whilst they built up the resources of the nation, must, in secret, often have well-nigh despaired of winning through in the long run.

Nine years passed, eventful chiefly from the fact of their comparative uneventfulness, and then a new and terrible danger took shape almost in sight of our shores. The Low Countries had always been the vital part of the Continent from the point of view of English diplomacy, which had aimed, as it aims at this day, at keeping them from passing under the sway of a first-class European power. For the last half century, indeed, they had belonged to the Monarch of Spain, but they had shewn themselves sufficiently independent not to be the subservient tools of his policy, a fact that had done more than anything else to save the England of Henry VIII. Philip determined to put an end to this once and for all. Out of Italy came marching a small but beautifully disciplined army under the first captain of the age, the terrible Duke of Alva. Against such a force resistance seemed hopeless, the Low Countries were held in a grip of iron for the Counter Reformation. Nobody knew at what moment these invincible and implacable veterans might not effect a landing on our own shores. There were those who would have welcomed them; the greatest nobleman in the land, the Catholic Duke of Norfolk, had intrigued to bring them over before his decapitation brought it about that, in the words of Professor Pollard, " for more than half a century England had to do its best—defeat the Spanish Armada, conquer Ireland, circumnavigate the globe, lay the foundations of empire, produce the literature of the Elizabethan age—without any ducal assistance."

The situation was rendered no easier by the presence, in England, of the fugitive Queen of Scots, who, with her Catholic faith and French antecedents, found her position impossible from the first

in a fiercely Calvinist Scotland, and who threw herself on Elizabeth's mercy to escape from her own subjects. As claimant to the English crown she became the centre of every Catholic intrigue and the hope of every adherent of the old faith. Then the Papacy, which had hesitated to commit itself, so long as there was any chance of bringing the erring Elizabeth back into the fold, launched the dread sentence of excommunication and deposition, which some bold hand, that in all probability knew the use of knife and pistol, nailed to the wall of Lambeth Palace in the night. The Queen was now a marked woman. The presumptive heir was her prisoner Mary, and only Elizabeth's life stood between the Counter Reformation and the conquest of England. The weapon of murder was well known to the champions of Christ's Church. It was gravely defended even in theory. The Jesuit Mariana advocated it in the course of a friendly dialogue which is supposed to take place beneath the orange trees of Seville. It cut short the career of Philip's worst enemy, William the Silent, the liberator of Holland, and on the fourth day of the most elaborate torture that could be devised the pious assassin was able so far to retain his clear conscience and sense of humour as to join in the laugh at the executioner when the latter struck his own thumb. It removed the last of the Valois as it was to remove the first of the Bourbons. Elizabeth's death would have meant more to the Church than any of these—and yet she lived. Her subjects cherished that life with an intense solicitude. On one occasion, when some unskilful duck-shooter landed a shot in the royal barge, her Majesty obtained great kudos by saving him at the last moment from being hanged.

The black and secret army of the Jesuits was abroad, men whose consciences would stick at nothing in the cause they served with blind obedience. It is not to be wondered at that every Catholic came to be looked upon as a potential traitor, and that the law should declare the avowed soldiers of the Papacy, the priests and above all the Jesuits, to be traitors by the mere fact of their being in England. This was the more unfortunate because many Catholics succeeded in remaining loyal Englishmen in spite of their Holy Father's anathema. Such men were in a cruelly hard position because the government, though by no means intolerant, was in a perpetual state of not unnatural nervousness. The records of the Treshams are a pathetic instance of how a naturally loyal family can be so far embittered as to be driven to take part, at last, in gunpowder treason. At the time of the Armada they had begged to be employed against the enemy, but her Majesty, while courteously acknowledging

their loyalty, had them shut up "alonely to frustrate the enemy's expectation of finding any succour". So, willed they, nilled they, into the palace of the Bishop of Ely they went, subsisting on a diet carefully assimilated to that of the Fleet prison, and watching, with what feelings we can imagine, levies no more loyal than themselves drilling beneath the windows.

England was now to all intents and purposes in a state of siege and under martial law. There was probably not a monarch in Europe more indifferent to the religious principles of his subjects than Elizabeth, but it was her principle, as it was to be that of Wellington, that the Queen's government must be carried on. For anyone who stood, or might be suspected of standing in the way, there was short shrift. If her hand was heavy on the Catholics, it was by no means light upon too zealous Protestants. There were Puritan as well as Catholic martyrs, and it is significant of the public spirit that one of these, who had only his hand and not his head cut off, promptly waved his cap with the other, with the cry of "God save the Queen".

For the first years of Elizabeth's reign, after the coup of Leith whose results were more profound than showy, her policy was one of steady and imperturbable stonewalling. It was no time for brilliancy; it was enough, in all conscience, if she could keep out of mischief. There was little outwardly inspiriting in what she accomplished. She managed, by taking advantage of internal dissensions in France, to occupy the old English conquest of Havre, but her garrison was ignominously expelled as soon as the French were able to unite against it, and the shadowy claim to Calais went by the board at the same time. She was, however, to accomplish a more brilliant coup against the redoubtable Alva, with whom she was formally at perfect peace. With that superb calculation that made her know exactly how close to the wind it was safe to sail, she calmly seized a rich treasure on the way from Spain to the Governor of the Netherlands. It was a shrewd blow, for it impelled Alva, whose economic ideas were of the crudest, to supply the deficiency by putting crippling taxation on trade, a matter which touched the Dutchmen in a more tender spot than the Inquisition and Alva's Council of Blood. The Netherlands burst into rebellion.

And yet during all this time and for long afterwards the ponderous empire and ponderous intelligence of King Philip remained quiescent. This man had something more than the patience of a Red Indian; he was like some slow and impersonal force of nature, his policy had

the movement of a glacier. He believed that time and God and money and the invincible battalions were on his side; he would crush his enemies to powder at the right hour, and the hour had not struck. There was one consideration more than any other that made him hold his hand. Mary, the Catholic Queen, lived; once Elizabeth was out of the way—and nobody knew better than Philip how such a contingency was likely to be hastened—his policy would accomplish itself. So he waited and waited, and nothing would provoke him until the fall of the axe at Fotheringay.

The beginning of Elizabeth's reign saw the nation wrapped in a mental gloom out of which it was impossible for any great art or literature to be born. The impulse that had produced the delicious lyrics of Wyatt—"and is thy heart so strong?"—and the pedestrian but not uninteresting efforts of Surrey to bring the Italian music to England, had been damped by the adverse circumstances of the times. They had no immediate successors; the seed they had sown was choked among the thorns of national humilation. The principal composition of Elizabeth's early years was a laborious and depressing compilation called *The Mirroure for Magistrates*, which had been begun in the last reign, and contained "the falls of the first unfortunate princes of this land". This uninspiriting subject proved so well attuned to the spirit of the times that the series of unfortunate princes was continued up to quite recent years. This voluminous dirge was, in fact, on an immense scale, one of those "draftie songs" which, when recited by the pilgrim monk, had worn out the patience of Chaucer's host—and moved him to unmentionable comment. Sackville, the principle contributor to the Mirroure, also wrote a dismal tragedy called *Ferrex and Porrex*, the application of which to the dramatist's own time is only too obvious:

> "To each force of foreign princes' power,
> Whom vantage of your wretched state may move
> By sudden arms to gain so rich a realm,
> And to the proud and greedy mind at home,
> When blinded lust of reign leads to aspire,
> Lo, Britain realm is left an open prey."

all pointing to a moral with which Englishmen had good reason to be familiar:

> "These be the fruits your civil wars will bring."

A study of the literature of this time does, in fact, reveal the fear of civil strife that had been seared into the consciousness of the nation. England was too obviously a house divided against itself. Now and for a long time afterwards, the direst of evils that poet

or dramatist could imagine was a divided England, and this feeling helps to explain how it was that the nation instinctively sought refuge in a system like the Elizabethan, which subordinated religious and all other considerations to the one object of keeping it united under a firm government, and yet without forfeiting that which gave it its distinctive character and made England lovable to Englishmen. It was the one redeeming feature amid the general gloom that Englishmen were, on the whole, convinced that only themselves could be the architects of their own ruin. It was not Rome that had conquered Arthur, but Mordred; it was, in Sackville's play, the quarrels of their own princes that had left our Trojan ancestors a prey to the foreigner.

The merciless rigour with which any subject was pursued who was suspected of threatening the peace of the realm is explained by the fact that Englishmen saw themselves under a humiliation that would never have been but for traitors, national blacklegs. That they had not lost their belief in the essential soundness of England is shown by the fact that the gloom is relieved by one fine panegyric of the Commonwealth by Sir Thomas Smith, who, lawyer that he was, found the basis of our constitution in our Common Law, as distinct from the Roman Law of the Continent. And yet if Elizabeth had perished by force of arms or the assassin's knife at any time within the first twenty years of her reign, her name would have been linked with a time of singular barrenness, and we should perhaps have talked of " Poor Queen Bess's cheerless days ".

9

The Age of Adventurers

Elizabeth's policy was to sit still and play for time, but to follow such an example of wise passivity was not necessarily in accordance with the desires or interests of individuals among her subjects. The two outstanding features of a situation charged with peril and hostility were that for reasons of their own, neither Elizabeth nor Philip would fight—as yet. Everybody knew perfectly well that at the first favourable opportunity Philip would make such a Hell in England as he had made in the Netherlands; there was one time when his half-brother, Don John of Austria, had been on the point of transferring the whole Netherlands army to England, in the cause of that lady in distress, Mary, Queen of Scots. It became equally

well known that Elizabeth desired nothing better than to do all the harm she could to Philip without quite stepping over the line between peace, of a sort, and war. Another fact was beginning to be discovered about the colossal Empire of Spain. Its very size made it vulnerable. The veterans of Alva and Parma might be invincible in their own element, but the coast was the limit of their power. The sea was for the adventurer.

The conditions of Elizabeth's reign gave the adventurer the golden opportunity for coming into his own. Even before her accession he had been abroad, pushing into the ice of the arctic winter in quest of the North East Passage that did not exist, or putting out from some Cornish Creek in pursuit of a well-laden Spaniard trading between Antwerp and Cadiz. The fiery persecution of Mary's reign had the effect of driving a number of Protestant gentleman of good families to seek their safety and fortunes on the high seas. Conspicuous among these were the natives of the two South-Western shires, Devon and Cornwall, that had once formed the Celtic hinterland of Wessex. It is permissible to conjecture that the strain of Celtic blood had something to do with the restlessness of imagination, the desire to push forth into the unknown, that inspired so many of these worthies. But the whole spirit of the Renaissance was to develop the personality in this world on account of the very restriction that cut off its hope of the next. New worlds were calling, Eldorados, empires—of that day much more than of our own are Mr. Kipling's words true :—

> "The blindest bluffs hold good, dear lass,
> And the wildest tales are true,
> And the men bulk big on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail,
> And life runs large on the long trail—the trail that is always new."

The discovery of Columbus had changed England from an outpost of Continental Europe to an island in the middle of the world, but it took our slow imaginations more than half a century to realize the difference. The chief work of the pre-Elizabethan years was the cutting loose of our Continental moorings. Henry VIII had burst the bonds that tied us to Rome, and the fall of Calais had destroyed our bridgehead for French adventures. But England had lagged behind Spain and even France in the exploitation of the New World, and when she did come into the field it was, characteristically enough, not, except indirectly, as part of State policy, but by the enterprise of individual Englishmen.

It would be profitless to attempt any condensation of the splendid

story of Elizabethan adventure; it requires to be read, every page of it, in Hakluyt. A glance at a map, on which the tracks of some of these men are marked, will shew how Englishmen, through almost incredible difficulties and hardships, won their way to the remotest parts of the globe, opening avenues for our now rapidly expanding trade. Their enterprises are none the less wonderful for their frequent mis-direction. Englishmen were obsessed with the idea of finding a North East or a North West Passage, and it was this that fortunately hung back their colonizing efforts and, incidentally, enabled us to get into lucrative trade relations with the Tsars by way of Archangel. It would have been fatal had we tried to develop an empire on the lines of Spain. Perhaps the most interesting, in the light of subsequent history, of all these journeys is that of Fitch, who gave the first detailed English description of what was subsequently to be our Empire of India, and who covered the long, straight, twenty-two miles of road from Agra to Fatepursikri, at the time when this was one continuous bazaar, in the reign of a monarch who could have given an example of toleration and enlightenment to every sovereign in Europe—the wise and magnificent Akbar.

There was, however, a class of adventurer who found a less reputable field for his activities. When men take the law into their own hands, it is an easy transition from smiting the enemies of one's faith and country to plundering anyone whatever with pockets fat enough to pick. Where the individual is let loose on the seas with little or no control from higher authority, he will naturally tend to thrive according to his nature, and an atmosphere of general lawlessness does not tend to make men too delicate in their methods. There is a seamy side to the doings of even our most gallant adventurers. It is not pleasant to read of Cavendish capturing three Spaniards and a Fleming and torturing them for news, as if this were all part of the day's work, nor of the particularly mean trick played by Sir Jerome Horsey on a niece of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, whom he deliberately betrayed into her uncle's far from gentle clutches, a piece of service which, he wrote, " was very acceptable, whereof I much repent me." And if these were the doings of the best and, we might almost add, official adventurers, what could be expected from the many exceedingly rough diamonds who were able, in those days of light tonnage and small crews often armed with bows and arrows, to man a ship and put to sea? Such jolly work, no doubt, as when

" Four-and-twenty Spaniards,
Mighty men of rank,
With their Signoras
Had to walk the plank." [1]

The fact is that the Channel swarmed with every description and nationality of pirate craft, and the line between a pirate and a lawful adventurer was not an easy one to draw. Many gallant gentlemen accepted letters of marque from the Huguenot leaders in France, and some of these died fighting bravely for the Protestant cause, either as the Queen's men, or the Prince of Condé's in France. Some of them left their irregular career to take important posts under the government, like Ned Horsey, who became Sir Edward Horsey and Governor of what was then the important outpost of the Isle of Wight. But there were others, and of what kidney they were is rendered sufficiently apparent by a dispatch of Sir F. Chamberlain to the Privy Council, in 1546, from the Isle of Guernsey. " The coasts there," he writes, " are much haunted by piratical Englishmen, by whom many murders and outrages are committed," and he asks to have a small, well-manned pinnace placed at his disposal, a proof that most of these marauders must have been gentlemen in a very small way of business, much the same, no doubt, as put out from every port and creek during the passage of the Armada down the Channel, to swarm, like angry wasps, round the straggling crowd of galleons.

The records of the Port of Rye are filled with the doings of pirates, whom it was quite beyond the resources of either State or municipality to control, but whose efforts against Catholics were cordially assisted by the inhabitants of the town. The Sea Beggars of the Netherlands, who started the revolt against Alva, joined in the game with letters of marque from the Prince of Orange, and were popular enough among the townspeople until they went the usual way of extending their attentions to the ships of all nations. There is a petition to the Privy Council, in 1582, from the Mayor and inhabitants of Poole, " for reform of abuses occasioned by notorious pirates who haunt the harbour and road of Stondland to the utter undoing of the poor town of Poole, and who threaten not only to break the prisons there, and so to carry the prisoners away pirates, but also to fire the town, or take away the victuals carried by its small barks." One Spanish ship was actually taken by a pirate out of Falmouth harbour.

But while it would be misleading to treat Elizabeth's adventurers

[1] Quoted in *Highways and Byways in Devon and Cornwall* by A. H. Norway.

as if they were all the worthy Protestant sea-dogs dear to the heart of Kingsley, it would be unjust and, for an Englishman, unnatural, to lump them together as if they were all ruffians and pirates in the ordinary sense of the word. The fact is that they included every kind and shade of character, from Sir Francis Drake, one of the noblest and most lovable men that ever lived, to scoundrels like Ward, who, when the death of the great Queen ended the days when it was safe to plunder Spaniards, took service with the Barbary Corsairs. The pages of Hakluyt establish it beyond a doubt that many of the adventurers were men of great and simple heart, and often religious enthusiasts. Frobisher set up for his crew, when they fared forth into the icy waters North of Canada, a standard of daily life that might have satisfied the severest requirements of Cromwell's "saints", and there is no more impressive scene in our history than that of Captain Doughty, who had been justly condemned for calculated indiscipline, partaking with Drake of the Holy Communion before his execution. Nothing could better express the best type of Englishmen's serene confidence and consciousness of a just cause, than Drake's words on the approach of the Armada: "Never was fleet so strong as this, but the Lord of Strength is stronger."

It would be the veriest cant to talk as if the operations of our adventurers against the Spaniards, on this or the other side of the line, were just ordinary piracy. Spain may have been nominally at peace with England, but the cruelties that she practised on innocent English traders and seamen, for no worse crime than their holding the established faith of their country, were notorious. A Spanish port was no safe place for an Englishman. There was also the monstrous pretension, on the part of Spain and Portugal, and subsequently of Spain alone, to establish an exclusive monopoly over the whole of the New World, to shut out all other nations from peaceful trade, and to enforce this monopoly by every device of cruelty and treachery imaginable. Horrible stories were told of the dungeons of the Inquisition, and it was only human nature that English seamen should retaliate by such methods as that of Cobham, who sewed up a Spanish crew in a sail and so consigned them to the fishes. Peace or no peace, Spanish merchandise and Spanish gold were fair game, and we entertain infinitely more respect for the methods of our Drakes and Oxenhams than for those of the respectable Russells and their like whose depredations were at the expense of their own countrymen—too often of the poorest.

It is only fair to say that the Queen and her council did their

best to suppress piracy, properly so-called. Burleigh was an uncompromising enemy of pirates, and he looked with scant favour on the adventures of Drake himself—the Captain Doughty to whom we have already referred was supposed to have been inspired by him. "I hate all pirates mortally," wrote Burleigh on one occasion, and there is no doubt of his honesty in the matter. But the problem was one with which no government could cope, and Elizabeth was not above giving secret encouragement to men who were plucking the feathers of her great enemy. When she openly knighted Drake on his return from a buccaneering voyage of unprecedented returns, when she wore plundered jewels [1] in her crown and calmly threatened to imprison the Spanish ambassador when he hinted at the affair coming to cannon, it began to convince even the slow intelligence of Philip that something decisive must be done.

The Elizabethan adventurer was a land-dog as well as a sea-dog. We have seen him already fighting for the Huguenots, and the rebellion of the Low Countries gave him an even more promising field of operations. There were plenty of Englishmen in the Netherlands before Elizabeth took the cause into her own hands by allowing the Earl of Leicester to join in the defence of these provinces with English troops to support him. This episode is chiefly remarkable for the affair which ended in the death of the most brilliant of all the Elizabethan gentlemen, the young and accomplished Sir Philip Sidney. He illustrates the strength and also the weakness of the system which allowed the most important objects of policy to be carried out by individuals more or less on their own initiative. With all his gracious and endearing qualities, he had not the sense of discipline that makes an efficient soldier or servant of the State. He had wanted to accompany Drake on one of his voyages, but Drake had not wanted him, and for the best of reasons—Drake was a disciplinarian and meant to be obeyed. The affair that ended in Sidney's death would, under modern conditions, have ended, if he had survived, in a court martial for gross disobedience of orders, the charge in which he and other young bloods took part having sacrificed the whole military objective, which was the capture of a Spanish convoy.

It was the exploits of these adventurers and not any national enterprise that began, about in the seventies, to lift the spirits of

[1] It may not be out of place to remark that even her sister Mary's Catholicism had shrunk from restoring one immensely valuable crown jewel pilfered from the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

Englishmen out of the gloom into which they had fallen in the beginning of the reign. It was the adventurers, whose exploits, passed from tongue to tongue and hawked in broadsheets about the streets, began to ruffle up the spirits of Englishmen, and convince them, in the absence of any great national victory, that they were still the men of Cressy and Agincourt. And literature, when it begins to revive and gather inspiration with astonishing rapidity, passes through a phase of wild and chaotic individualism, as the spirit of the sea-dogs enters into it. As in travel and buccaneering, so in letters, abundance of life is seeking vent in action, real or imaginary, in wild and bizarre experiments—abundance without discipline and therefore, as yet, without full coherence. This phase may be said to last right up to the final breach with Spain and the triumph over the Armada.

The last and greatest of these author adventurers is Kit Marlowe, the premature and bloody close of whose career ushers in the dawn of Shakespeare's, and whose influence is plainly apparent in the greater dramatist's earliest work. The towering and hectoring swell of Marlowe's metre, the ruthless and boundless thirst for power that is the dominant motive of all his heroes, and their innocence of public spirit, are the faithful reflection of a time when the high seas were every man's hunting ground and to whom, as jesting Shakespeare put it:

> " the world's my oyster,
> Which I with sword will open ! "

Most triumphant of all Marlowe's characters is the figure he makes of the terrible Duke of Guise, in a topical play written to voice the horror excited by the massacre of St. Bartholomew. It is obvious that Guise ought to be the villain of the piece, and so, in a sense, he is. But it is evident that Marlowe loves Guise as much as, and more frankly than Milton loves Satan. The Duke's personality dominates the play, the finest lines are given to him, even in death he is glorious—unconquered—

> " *Vive la messe !* Perish Huguenots !
> Thus Caesar did go forth, and thus he died ! "

Marlowe's *Edward II* is not, like Shakespeare's chronicle plays, devoted primarily to the glory and development of England, but is a thunderous and almost unmeaning clash of tumultuous personalities, it is, in fact, a first-class costume play, not a criticism of history. In *Tamburlaine,* Marlowe fairly surpasses himself in drawing such a hero as every true Elizabethan must have seen

himself sometimes in his rosiest dreams, riding in a chariot, driving a team of Kings, and rating them for not being able to do more than twenty miles a day. As for *Dr. Faustus*, it is amusing to contrast Marlowe's version with that of Goethe. The Elizabethan doctor has no yearnings after the one metaphysically perfect moment, and Marlowe, though he had little enough sense of a joke, would have rocked with laughter at the notion of a sentimental would-be suicide, driven to the poison cup by the inadequacy of human knowledge and putting it down again because the Easter Bells happen to start ringing. Doctor Faustus knows perfectly well what he wants and, unlike Faust, understands the necessity of paying up at the end of it. He has bargained his immortal soul for a few crowded years of life, kissing Helen, a genuine Helen and no misty emanation of classical poetry, calling up blind Homer to sing, letting off squibs under the Pope's chair, all that is glorious, all that is vulgar—only life!

Marlow is but one member of a regular blood and thunder school which includes Kyd, the sportive Kyd as he was ironically called, Greene, who is supposed to have called Shakespeare an upstart crow, and Shakespeare himself, in that genial chapter of horrors, Titus Andronicus, though in this play there are already touches that reveal the pitiful and public-spirited bard to whose throne these others could never soar. There is a delicious plate to illustrate Kyd's tragedy of *Jeronimo* in which one character is hanging from a tree, a lady in the background, calling "Murder! Help!" is being restrained by a gallant with a drawn sword, who is calling "Stop her mouth!" while an elderly gentleman, with a sword in one hand and a lighted torch in the other, is saying, "Alas, it is my son Horatio!" The thrillingest cowboy film or Surrey-side Melodrama is tame stuff compared with this!

10

The Awakening Muse

To understand the significance of the *Sturm und Drang* that preluded the full glory of Shakespeare and Spenser, we must not only look to national conditions. England was still in close enough touch with the Continent to be sensitive to those great outward spreading waves of thought and feeling that periodically renewed her spirit. We have seen how the Renaissance came to

England first and in part with Chaucer, how with the early Tudors Italian scholarship had captured the intelligentsia of the nation. It seemed as if the group that centred round Erasmus under the auspices of the young Henry VIII were destined to leaven the whole life of the nation. This promise was very imperfectly fulfilled, though the foundations of a subsequent revival were laid more truly than many at the time imagined. For if there was one thing that the men of the Tudor Renaissance did understand and concentrate upon, it was education. Such famous pedagogues as Dean Colet and Lily of St. Pauls, Elyot and Ascham, Cheke, and Udall, are sufficient to show how seriously the task of education, at least that of the upper class, was taken in hand, while such linguistic and learned prodigies as poor young Lady Jane Grey are sufficient evidence that their efforts were not in vain. The seeds of a national culture, when they were wafted across the sea, did not fall on an unprepared soil. The young gentleman of Sidney's day was as deft at turning a sonnet as his present-day successor at stopping an approach on the green.

One cause of the comparative failure of the early Tudor Renaissance we have noted in the depressing course of national affairs after Henry VIII's death. But there is another which, though we must assign it a secondary place, must have been efficient, at least to some extent. The source of inspiration was mainly Italian, and between Italy and England there was a long journey and often actively hostile territory. It was no easy matter to keep touch, even when the bond of unity still existed that was supplied by the Roman Church. When that bond was snapped, England and Italy were separated by a wider gulf than before. Either might have said to the other, like Dr. Watts to the atheists :

> "There's a wide difference in our race,
> And different are our goals."

The Renaissance in Italy had been declining in genius and vigour throughout the sixteenth century, and the deadly blight of the Counter Reformation was now to settle on the land. Italy never ceased to be fruitful of inspiration, of a sort, down to the declining days of the eighteenth century, but she ceased to be the main source. The soul of the Renaissance, like Leonardo da Vinci, crossed the Alps and found a home in France.

It was inevitable that it should be so, for the Renaissance was life, and where liberty is crushed out of a people, life runs cold. Michelangelo knew it ; his Night, the night of Italy, flung herself at the

feet of her ideal Medici, the patriot hero who could never be, closing her eyes in uneasy slumber with a prayer to those who went by to tread softly that she might forget. But the last despairing cry had hardly been rent from the cold marble of the tomb when, out of distant Touraine, there awoke a burst of laughter whose reverberations have even now not died away. Rabelais had arisen, the child of earth, with a thirst never to be sated, not for righteousness, but for everything life had to give, here and now. "Drink!" was the last word of human wisdom. The spirit of medieval Christianity was never more whole-heartedly contradicted. Rabelais had his heaven, but it was a heaven on earth and of the earth.

"All their life was spent not in laws, statutes or rules, but according to their own free will and pleasure . . . in all their rule and strictest tie of their order there was but this one clause to be observed,

DO WHAT THOU WILT;

because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompts them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honour."

With the coming of Rabelais, Italy ceases to be the leader of the Renaissance, and France for awhile takes up the running. She produced a line of classical scholars of even greater accomplishment than those who had adorned the Florentine Academy, partly, no doubt, because the way had been prepared for them; she gave birth to a school of poets who for lyric delicacy have never been surpassed; her long and doubtful contest of Catholic and Huguenot gave rise to political speculations of the most daring order. The culminating figure of the French Renaissance is, however, Montaigne. It was for him to demonstrate the supreme importance of personality. He made the discovery in practice that Descartes was afterwards to make in theory, that though everything else may be wrapped in doubt, one truth at least is certain—I exist. It is not what a man gets, nor the power that he wields, nor the figure he cuts in the world that matters, but what he is. "Thou hast business enough within thyself, therefore stray not abroad: men give themselves to hire . . . we should thriftily husband our mind's liberty." The Christian had said that the world counts for nothing in comparison with a man's prospects in the world to come; Montaigne thought that nothing counts much but what a man is here, in the only life we are sure of.

Such was the French Renaissance of the sixteenth century, and it was fortunate for England that she was, during the reign of Elizabeth, peculiarly open to French influence. Our humiliation at Calais had removed at once the temptation for English sovereigns to use it as a base for another Agincourt adventure, and the standing grievance from which France had suffered by the violation of her soil. The breaking of old Burgundian alliance by the violence of Alva, and the ever-growing hostility between England and Spain, tended, in despite of religion, to make French policy gravitate towards an understanding with England. The capture of Leith removed one main source of contention in the shape of the Franco-Scottish alliance.

Elizabeth knew well how to turn such a situation to profit, and did not hesitate to use her own charms as a pawn in the diplomatic game. She carried on desperate flirtations with two successive French princes, which never quite ripened to marriage, but which helped to bring about a *rapprochement* between the two nations that was not confined to the political sphere. Frenchmen were about the court, French literary fashions came into vogue, French lines were even inserted, with charming effect, into English songs—"*Pardona moy je vous en prie*", "*N'oserez vous mon bel ami?*" to take the two happiest. So that instead of coarse abuse and shouts of "French dogue!" our neighbours were now greeted with the immortal compliment of Sidney to

"That sweet enemy, France".

There was also the powerful stimulus to understanding that came from the sympathy between English and French Protestants, and from the thousands of the latter who sought refuge from Guisian persecution on our shores. These men brought with them ideas by no means likely to be smiled upon by the powers that were in England. Theories were abroad about free German ancestors who governed themselves and whose children ought to be governing themselves now, revolutionary notions about the sovereign being the servant of the people and liable like other servants to dismissal. But the fruit of these notions was to be garnered by other hands than those of Elizabeth's generation.

The French Renaissance, therefore, came in full force to England at the very time when the country was surging with a wild and disordered individualism that sought any and every outlet. The result was a series of attempts on the part of our poets, dramatists and prose writers to carry Olympus by storm with as light-hearted

a confidence as impelled Grenville to attack, with his one ship, the whole Spanish fleet. One of the strangest literary extravagances on record is the movement known as "euphuism", which consisted in an exuberant experimentation in language, which is the very reverse of decadence, because, instead of using curious words to tickle a jaded palate, it is the sheer overflow of high spirits—"idle fino" as one song puts it. The manifesto of this school may be said to be John Lyly's *Euphues and his England*, from which we extract the following quite typical passage:

"She hath exiled the swallow that sought to spoil the grasshopper, and given bitter almonds to the ravenous wolves, that endeavoured to devour the silly lambs, burning even with the breath of her mouth like the princely stag the serpents that were engendered by the breath of the huge elephant, so that now all her enemies are as whist as the bird Attagen, who never singeth any time after she is taken, nor they being so overtaken."

The lady referred to is not, as might be supposed, the proprietress of a menagerie, but Elizabeth. This euphuism affected the early style of Shakespeare, it is rampant in *Love's Labour Lost* and is a blemish that occasionally mars the beauty of *Romeo and Juliet*.

We are now in a position to appreciate the strength and defect of the rapidly maturing Elizabethan literature. Its strength i in its abundance of life, in its perfect realization of what was to be Blake's motto, "Energy is an eternal delight." To them life was energy and energy joy. And life is, after all, the root of the matter. Their weakness was their absolute lack of discipline. Of that immense energy too large a part was wasted, dissipated, turned to trivial or impossible ends. Thus we find the greatness of their work in fairly direct proportion to the restraint imposed upon it by the conditions of its medium. It is stronger in poetry than in prose, because the strict conditions of the sonnet and other imported forms compelled the poets to some sort of restraint and concentration.

Elizabethan prose is no doubt magnificent, but it is so incoherent, both in the construction of its sentences and in the power to concentrate on the development of a main theme, that it is seldom very readable except in patches here and there. Almost any paragraph we may open upon in Sidney's Arcadia retains the fragrance of his personality, as of crushed roses, but to wade through the Arcadia from beginning to end is a task that few would care to undertake, and fewer still would carry through. The greatest of Elizabethan prose was in translations, because here the translator was never for

a moment left to his own devices ; North's Plutarch was the translation of a translation, and the fact of the undisciplined English mind being brought into prolonged contact with French habits of order and restraint, as in this and in Florio's Montaigne, was of inestimable value. But Englishmen had already been bequeathed a treasure beyond price in the model afforded by the prose of the prayer book and the Bible.

Of a deeper-seated weakness, which is that of the whole Renaissance, its insensibility to the highest spiritual values, we have already spoken and shall have to speak again.

II

The Supreme Crisis

After the murder, by King Philip's instigation, of the patriot leader of the revolted Netherlands, William the Silent, events began to move with rapidity to a crisis. England and Holland both knew that the fall of the one would entail that of the other, and in 1585 the most consummate military commander of the age, the Prince of Parma, struck a resounding blow for Spain by the siege and capture of Antwerp. It was then that Elizabeth, though she wisely declined the sovereignty of the Netherlands, allowed Leicester to intervene with English troops. Philip was fast losing the remnants of his sorely tried patience. Drake was now El Draco, the Dragon, to Spaniards. No port or treasure ship in their vast overseas Empire was safe. That Empire was now vaster than ever, since Portugal, with all her colonies, had been absorbed into Spain, which was like a vast colossus, bestriding East and West. It was now that Elizabeth, though with some womanly hesitation, took the opportunity of severing the last thin thread by which the Spanish sword of Damocles was kept from falling. The morality of Mary Stuart's execution may be open to criticism, but as a stroke of policy nothing could have been timed with a nicer exactitude. Elizabeth, like a skilful trainer, had brought up England to the fighting pitch, she was as ready for the supreme test as thirty years before she was unprepared. The challenge of Fotheringay rang through Europe, and heavily but with ponderous decision Philip took it up.

The plan was simple ; a fleet of overwhelming strength, embodying the whole gathered might of the Spanish Empire, was to hold the Channel in order to cover the landing of Parma with his army of

veterans. The Catholics in England, so Philip's intelligence ran, would flock to his standard. It was on this that Philip counted, not on the possibility of vanquishing a united England. Some historians have been misinformed enough to write as if on Parma's landing all would have been over but for the shouting. The Prince himself, cool-headed soldier that he was, knew better and said so. Certainly Leicester would have been a child in his hands, but a united England was not to be manoeuvred out of existence by twenty or thirty thousand men. In order to succeed it was necessary for Spain to have the command of the sea and an England divided against herself.

So far from attaining this latter end, Philip, by his open threat to our shores, had done the one thing needful to transform an unruly individualism into an ardent and conscious patriotism. The adventurers with one accord ceased playing for their own hands and fell into their places in the national team. The Catholics forgot the Pope's bull and the penal laws, and rallied to Elizabeth. The Northern lords, always the most promising element of a rebellion, vied with each other in proofs of loyalty. A Protestant member of the great Catholic family of Howard was at Plymouth in command of the grand fleet there assembled. The Catholic Lord Morley wrote offering troops to defend his "natural and sweet country". The all-important city of London, which had blazed with bonfires on the condemnation of Mary Queen of Scots, when asked to furnish a quota of ships and men, had begged the Queen to accept double. When Elizabeth rode along the cheering ranks at Tilbury, with her "Let tyrants fear", Parma was already a beaten man.

Never before had patriotism burnt with such a pure and intense ardour. In every utterance of the time there is the same consciousness of national invincibility, no matter what the odds. The sea dogs speak with one voice, "it is not honourable"—the words are those of Hawkins—"for the Queen of England to be in any fear of the King of Spain." Still more emphatic are the words of an old salt who had been in a Spanish prison and had succeeded in getting away: "they make much account of their beastly great ships, but any good English ship is able to combat them." The story of Drake's game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe may be unproved, but nothing is more probable in itself. The experienced seaman, who had crippled the Armada and might have destroyed it only a year before, knew well enough that the unwieldly galleons, spread in

a crescent of seven miles from end to end, were drifting to their doom—they stood not the ghost of a chance.

For war is in the long run not an affair of big battalions nor of strategical skill, but a clash of civilizations, and such a hidebound and heavy-witted civilization as that of Spain was certain to break against the living and glowing resistance of little England. The Spanish fleet was outwitted even before it set sail. It was years behind the times, designed for the needs of Mediterranean warfare where ships were manoeuvred in close order like companies of soldiers, and where ramming and boarding were relied upon for success. The commanders of these galleons were qualified not by seamanship but by rank; only a Duke or a Marquis was eligible, and the Admiral in Chief was a court favourite without even a pretence to competence. The Spaniards were as brave as lions and actuated by something of the crusading spirit that had shattered the Turks at Lepanto, but against the superior intelligence and seamanship of their adversary they were as helpless as a flock of sheep.

What happened was simple. For a week the handy and well-gunned ships of the Queen sailed round and through the Armada as it sailed up the Channel, "plucking their feathers" as Drake expressed it. The Spaniards, harassed and damaged, but still substantially intact, found a somewhat insecure refuge in Calais roads, from which Howard succeeded in bolting them, in disgraceful panic, by the bluff of a few fireships. The English fleet, now freshly supplied with ammunition, dashed in for the decisive battle off Gravelines, and all day long they shot the galleons to pieces with hardly any possibility of retaliation. Poor Parma, himself safely bottled up by the Dutchmen, had the mortification of watching his convoying fleet driven past, to the great joy of Drake, by a Southerly wind to the Northward, and the Englishmen speeding their departure with their few remaining rounds. The Armada was hopelessly beaten, even when the pursuit relaxed it dared not return, choosing rather to brave the perils of a homeward voyage round the North of Scotland than the terrible English fleet. Only a fraction of the once proud galleons, infested with disease and in the last depth of human misery, crawled back to Spain. After thirty years of hesitation, Philip had put it to the touch, and lost all.

Had England been capable of a sustained and disciplined effort of national concentration, she might have followed up this success by the utter overthrow of Spain as a maritime and imperial power. But it was just this sort of effort of which she was incapable. The

indiscipline engendered by an age of private adventure was too deeply ingrained. Elizabeth, in spite of the meanness of which she is too often accused, followed up her victory with energy and sound strategical instinct by striking a blow for Portugal. But the Elizabethans were as incapable of sticking to the main object of a naval offensive as they were of ordering their prose. The expedition, which was meant for Lisbon, wasted itself at Corunna. Even in the defeat of the Armada, discipline had not been at too high a level; Drake himself had had a lapse from grace when he left the fleet to plunder a galleon, and Howard had been late at the decisive battle for a similar reason. An attempt to capture the Treasure Fleet was ruined by the gross indiscipline of one Baskerville, and when at last the feat was accomplished it was by a Dutchman. The immortal exploit of the Little Revenge in fighting a whole Spanish fleet was a wanton sacrifice of one of the Queen's ships to an indefensible even if an heroic piece of swagger. The storm of Cadiz is the one really satisfactory episode of the long drawn anticlimax of the naval war, and that was not free from blemish.

12

The Elizabethan Springtime

The defeat of the Armada, the most dramatic triumph in the whole of our history, ushers in the full glory that we know as Elizabethan. Its effect on the country of dissipating the last shades of the gloom with which the reign had opened, and removing the weight of anxiety which the consciousness of the Spanish menace had engendered, was incalculable. England, merry as she was never to be again, burst into the full consciousness of her greatness, her beauty, and the place that of right belonged to her, second to none among the nations. And this sense of the joy of being English overflowed spontaneously into music and song. It was, above all things, a lyric age.

It is more than a coincidence that the defeat of the Armada should coincide with the opening of a new era in English music, that of the Madrigal. Hitherto, though throughout the Middle Ages, England had been a nation joyous with song, our greatest composers had devoted their chief efforts to beautifying the service of the Church. Not that it was always easy to distinguish the religious from the secular, for we have Taverner, who was organist

to Wolsey's Cardinal or Christchurch College, composing a Mass to the refrain of " Western wynde, why dost thou blow ? "

Religious music had, like all branches of art, been affected by the exuberant and worldly spirit of the Renaissance. More and more since the fourteenth century, the solemn Gregorians and plain chants had been superseded by polyphonic compositions that tended to become exercises in an elaborate technique, and to lose sight of their purpose as adjuncts to the service of God. Not only the Reformation, but even the Catholic Counter Reformation, witnessed an effort to purge religion of these harmonious vanities, just as the Cistercians had, to the great advantage of sound architecture, made a clean sweep of conscious ornamentation in their churches. In music, the results of the sixteenth century pruning were not to confine but to stimulate genius. In Rome itself, when it seemed likely that the reforming zeal of the Popes would have swept away the new music altogether, arose Palestrina, who showed that it was possible to wed polyphony to the most austere piety. In England we have a perfect galaxy of musical genius, of which the chief light, one of the brightest of all time, is that of Byrd.

If the Reformation had been pushed to its logical extreme, Church music might have been cut down to nasal and unaccompanied psalm-singing. Thomas Becon voices the spirit of the intransigeant Reformers when he describes music, in a sermon somewhat euphemistically entitled *The Jewel of Joy*, as " a more vain and trifling science than it becometh a man, born and appointed to matters of gravity, to spend much time about it ". Happily the two first reforming Archbishops were typical Anglicans in the sense of being typical Englishmen. A reasonable compromise, making the best of both worlds, was preferable in their eyes to consistency. Cranmer laid it down, as a working rule, that there should be a note for every syllable, and Parker, that Anglican of Anglicans, explained to some French Protestants that in our services " we use . . . reverent mediocrity [in the sense of a *via media*], and that we did not expel music out of our quires ".

More than that, with our English instinct of taking the best where we could get it, we did not hesitate to get our music, as we got our prayer book, from Catholic sources. Neither Tallis, who had been organist to Harold's foundation at Waltham, nor his even greater pupil, Byrd, gave more than lip-service to the new faith. These two master composers were, like the greatest of their contemporaries in the religious sphere, putting into music the spirit of that Catholic

humanism that culminated in More and the group of Oxford Reformers—an instance of Nietzsche's law that musical expression tends to postdate the spirit it expresses. Perhaps the first purely Anglican music is that of Orlando Gibbons in the reign of James I.

But it was impossible, in an age so saturated with Paganism as that of Elizabeth, that all the best tunes should be kept for God. It is Byrd who, more than anybody else, bridges the gulf between sacred and secular music, for his masses and anthems confer no surer title to immortality than the sweetness of *Wolsey's Wyld* and the ineffable dignity of *The Earl of Salisbury's Pavane.*

There is no reason that music should not have overflowed earlier into secular channels, except that until the great menace was lifted, England had not the heart to break forth into singing. Then, indeed, she stepped at one stride to a primacy she was never afterwards to renew. The whole nation became lyrical, and it was almost a breach of good manners for a lady or gentleman not to be able to read and render correctly at first sight his or her part in a song. The sweet part-songs that are characteristic of this time lent themselves with peculiar aptness to social intercourse. It is characteristic of what is known as "polyphonic" music that all the parts of a melody are of equal importance, and not, as obtains in modern music, with one chief part and all the rest subordinate. So that where two or three educated Elizabethans were gathered together, it was as natural for them to join in singing as it is for a modern house party to mitigate the tedium of each other's conversation by falling to bridge. The beauty of the Elizabethan lyric, the facility that it has for almost singing itself, arises from the fact that the lyric is not yet thought of apart from music. The old Saxons had been a singing people, and after a thousand years and more the tradition was alive. There is this noticeable about the Elizabethan as about the Saxon song—there is a note of wistfulness, almost of sadness, about its greatest joy. The melancholy of Jacques in Arden was not only the affectation of euphuism. It is the note which, out of the dark night of English song, surprised the French in *Tipperary.*

Next to music, colour is the characteristic of this great outpouring of life that we know as Elizabethan. If we must seek for any origin except the demands of exuberant nature, we should say that while the madrigal comes from Italy, the colour is imparted by the influence of Ronsard and that group of French poets known as the Pleiade. These men had a thirst for colour that was almost feverish, and

forms their very words—*émailler, blondelette, verdissant, vermeillette.* The whole work of Spenser and Shakespeare is steeped in colour from beginning to end. Spenser, in particular, luxuriates in deep and glowing hues that seem as if they were naturally the offspring of a southern climate. It is not merely the " store of vermeil roses " nor Duessa's scarlet robe purfled with gold and pearls that constitute Spenser's colour; it is implicit in his very metre, in the argus-tinted luxuriance of sound with which the wings of his muse are dyed.

The union of colour and sound leads to a third element of the Elizabethan spirit which is best described as pageantry, the delight in the mere richness and circumstance of life for its own sake. It is an element that has been misunderstood, or at any rate disliked, by critics of a later Puritan school. Shakespeare, it has been averred, was incapable of describing war because of his delight in its trappings. Such vaunts as

" From thy burgonet I'll rend thy bear,"

contrast poorly with the grim matter-of-factness of Bunyan's pilgrim giant-killers. But it was just in this spirit of exuberant light-heartedness that the Elizabethans did fight—Sidney flinging away his armour on a point of punctilio, Essex pitching his hat into the sea for joy of coming into action against Cadiz, Grenville chewing up glasses when the excitement of battle was on him. It may have been as illogical in these men, as it was for Nelson to make himself a target by wearing all his stars at Trafalgar, or for Beatty to be enjoying himself under fire on the bridge of the Lion, instead of in the conning tower, but with such men life is not a canal but a torrent, and overflows its banks.

Nothing is more characteristic of this life of the Elizabethans than the manysidedness of its expression. Music and poetry were only two among many arts. English painting, which, previous to the time of Sir Joshua, our insular modesty has so strangely under-valued, was alive and in direct continuity with an already honourable past. From the time of the ancient Northumbrian supremacy, the gracious art of illuminating manuscripts had been one of which Englishmen had been masters, and now that the invention of printing had put this out of date, its spirit survived in the portrait miniature. There is no more delicate touch than that of Nicholas Hilliard, who modelled himself on Holbein in miniature, and who revelled in those details of ornament so dear to the Elizabethan heart. It is characteristic of his time that he should, in his invaluable little treatise on

limning, have lauded his own country and compatriots as presenting beauties for the artist not inferior to those of Italy.

The forms of Elizabethan art are legion. In architecture the Church, that expression of a people's soul, had indeed ceased to be conspicuous, but the Elizabethan dwellings, great and small, are among the glories of England. It is interesting to watch the stubborn resistance that the Gothic spirit continues to offer against the advancing classical tide from abroad. As we should expect, it lingers most obstinately in the dwellings of old-fashioned folk, such as the Catholic Treshams of Rushton Hall, in the buildings of Oxford, which was even then becoming a home of lost causes, and, above all, in the cottages of the poor. It is only when cottage building practically ceases, that Gothic dies out of the land, and that is towards the end of the seventeenth century.

The Renaissance combines with Gothic in all sorts of strange and beautiful ways. Luxuriance is everywhere, but not to the neglect of essentials. The quaint and massive chimneys, the stout carven bannisters, the oak furniture with its rectilinear honesty of construction and its richness of decorative detail, are but random examples of the way in which the Elizabethan joy of life seized upon everything to transform it into its own likeness. The new luxury that spread even into the houses of the yeomanry and softened the beds of servants, was for glory as well as for use.

The most significant and vital feature of all was the intense and glowing patriotism that the menace of the Armada had focussed and its defeat had kindled into flame. Even before that victory, Englishmen were discovering how fair a heritage was theirs. On every side were the evidences of an intense interest in the history and legends of the country, both general and local. Not the least among Archbishop Parker's many titles to gratitude is the interest he took and stimulated in his country's past. Camden and Holinshed, Stowe and Norden, are but a few of the most conspicuous among many historical and antiquarian luminaries, nor can we forbear to mention that most delightful and intimate of all county surveys, the *Perambulation of Kent*, written by Parker's friend and correspondent, Lambarde. Men are interested in what they love, and if minute interest be, as it surely is, a criterion, the love of England must have been very great in those days of enthusiastic and often surprisingly accurate research.

It was not only real history that took the Elizabethan fancy. The legend of the country's Trojan origin, handed down from Geoffrey

of Monmouth, was revived for just the same reason that Geoffrey had revived it, because Englishmen wanted to see their country's present greatness against the background of a glorious past. Englishmen were, to quote from the title of an early seventeenth century play, the " True Trojans ", as truly descended from Aeneas and the gods as Romulus and the Scipios. This is worked into the design of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, where not only is the Red Cross Knight the English patron saint, but the champion of all the virtues is Prince Arthur, the " British Prince "—so strange a course had the shade of the old British-Roman general, if such he was, taken through time. The stories of Lear, Sabrina, and the other patriarchal Britons are clothed with a new splendour in Spenserean melody, and the poet adjures us to remember how doubly dear ought the remembrance of this dear country be to her children :

> " how brutish is it not to understand
> How much we owe to her that all us gave,
> That gave unto us all whatever good we have."

English patriotic writers were in one respect more fortunate than Geoffrey of Monmouth in the fact of their having not only a legendary but a real history to fall back upon. The great traditions of the French wars were alive and in everybody's mind. Not one of the Kings of England since the conquest but was a possible subject for epic, dramatic, or lyric treatment. It was the fashion to write enormous poems dealing with the whole or a part of England's history. There was *Albion's England*, by one William Warner, whom contemporary appreciation put on a level with Spenser and called the Homer and Virgil of his age, a production that superseded in popularity *The Mirroure for Magistrates*. It has at least the merit, if it has no other, of being more cheery. It is, in fact, a compendium of the whole of English history, from the Siege of Troy to the defeat of the Armada, and proceeds at a jog trot through a wilderness of rhymed quatrains with scarcely a pretence to poetry. Daniel, who was called the Phoebus of our land, and Drayton, each produced a tedious epic, popular enough in its day, dealing with the perennial subject of civil war in England and its moral of national unity. Drayton also produced, ten years after Elizabeth's death, a huge work called the *Polyolbion*, which is, in fact, a rhymed survey and panegyric of Britain, and whose purpose is rendered sufficiently clear by these words in the preface : " yea, and I fear . . . some that think themselves not meanly learned, being not rightly inspired by the Muses : such, I mean, as had rather read the fantasies of

foreign inventions, than to see the rarities and history of their own country delivered by a true native muse." Most people nowadays would gladly sacrifice all these well-meaning but pedestrian epics for the one superb and swinging song of Agincourt, by this same Drayton.

But incomparably the greatest Elizabethan epic of English history is supplied by Shakespeare's series of chronicle plays. These differ from Marlowe's *Edward II* and indeed from almost all historical plays, in being inspired by a reasoned patriotism. This is alone sufficient to establish the substantial genuineness of even the first part of the Henry VI triology, which despite the crudeness of metre commented on by Coleridge, and probably due to the fact that Shakespeare had literally hardly yet found his feet, is as alien in spirit from anything of the Marlowe-Greene school as Shakespeare is from—to take the most extreme contrast possible—Bacon.

The three Henry VI plays form, with *Richard III*, a closely knit tetralogy, starting with the first murmurings of civil strife round the bier of the patriot hero Henry V, and following the effects of national disunion through a culminating series of horrors, national defeat, a peasant rebellion (untuning the string of degree), civil war, and finally a tyrant in whose one person all these evils seem to culminate. Then, to round off the drama, we have another patriotic hero, for whom the first Tudor has to figure, restoring national unity and pointing the moral against public treason in unmistakable words.

Shakespeare develops his philosophy of history throughout the whole series of English and, we may add, of Roman plays. It is a philosophy that has been imperfectly understood, because to the ordinary critic the stage King or statesman is merely a man dressed up in gorgeous trappings to lend colour to a love affair or some other merely personal transaction. Henry V has, for instance, been almost universally condemned as a prig and a hypocrite because he answers a public insult, at the critical beginning of his reign, with a public snub. But the King of England cannot remain the Bohemian of Eastcheap, a blow to his prestige may spell ruin to the country, as even Falstaff, with his large heart breaking beneath his smile, must understand.

"Presume not that I am the thing I was."

With Shakespeare it is always the country first, and the individual, even when he is a Falstaff or a Richard II, has to be sacrificed.

In the supreme studies of personality, in *Hamlet*, in *Macbeth*, in

Othello,[1] the fact is never lost sight of that a man does not exist only for himself but also for his country. He is always a political and ought always to be a patriotic animal. Shakespeare has little enthusiasm for democracy, but—what is not always so much recognized—he is equally severe in his treatment of aristocratic egoists like Coriolanus, and of the Divine Right of Kings to put their own interests before those of the State, at least if we may judge from the characters of those monarchs who are allowed to give expression to this doctrine, Claudius of Denmark, and the second and third English Richards. His most obvious sympathy is for those who like the imaginary, though assuredly not the historical John of Gaunt, and that typical Englishman, the Bastard Faulconbridge, are intoxicated with the love of their country, and to whom England is a mother and a bride, a goddess and a heaven.

Shakespeare's philosophy of life will provide food for dispute until the end of time, and yet as to his main position, nothing could be more simple. It is the same both as regards individuals and nations, and is curiously similar to, though more fully and richly developed than that of Montaigne. To Montaigne the personality, the essential man, was the only thing that counted; so long as a man held fast to himself, it little mattered what else he did or became. This is precisely the message of Shakespeare not only for men, but for those personalities compact of millions, living, dead, and yet to be. All that we see, towers, palaces, temples, the world itself, passes away like a dream, and beyond the experience, so infinitely rich, of this dream life, is silence. But to one truth we may hold fast, though it be through the lips of a Polonius that it is spoken:

"Above all, to thine own self be true!"

That is the conclusion of the whole matter for the individual, and for the nation the Bastard takes up the message:

"Nought shall make us rue,
So England to itself do rest but true."

13

The Tragedy of Ireland

We wish that it were possible to close here our survey of this chequered yet magnificent period of our history. Unhappily there was, after the defeat of the Armada as after the march to the Rhine

[1] The Moor is a patriot by adoption. His last words are not of Desdemona's honour, but that of Venice.

in 1918, one of our British Islands whose past was a tragedy almost unrelieved, pregnant with hatred and disaster. Englishmen who wish to cure themselves of any undue tendency to national arrogance, can hardly devise for themselves a better penance than a perusal of the history, the real history, of England's dealings with Ireland.

And yet, even in these days of research and specialism, this is not so easy a task as it might appear. Of this tragedy there are two versions so different, that they might be told about two different nations, so little in common have they. One is that inspired by the sensitive patriotism and bitter memories of Irishmen, who have discovered how rich and gracious was the Celtic civilization of Ireland, and written with burning indignation of the tyranny, the greed, and the ruthlessness with which England in her strength applied herself to root it out. Then there is the more orthodox type of English historian who, though he certainly sees much to deplore in English methods of conquest, is nevertheless convinced that the Irish were intractable barbarians, uncouth, immoral, nomadic, and so wasted by never-ending feuds as to make some sort of firm government from the outside an absolute necessity.

These considerations have an important historical bearing. For if scholars, seeking for the truth about what happened centuries ago and sitting in the calm of their own studies, can so woefully disagree about the very existence of an Irish civilization, what could rough soldiers fighting for their lives on the spot, or statesmen, faced with the constant menace of rebellion aided by the foreigner, have been expected to understand ? A deep spiritual gulf was fixed between England and Ireland. There is scarcely a sign of any Englishman of importance having seen anything better than " rude " or " wild " Irishmen, with a " damnable " law and barbarous language. Even poets and scholars like Spenser could speak of the Irish with the same sort of contemptuous dislike as you may hear expressed in an Anglo Indian club to-day about the " natives ".

It is to the honour of Irishmen and lovers of Ireland that the fair fame of Irish civilization has been rescued, after many years, from these aspersions. We now know that there was a tradition of Irish culture that had endured continuously since the prehistoric tales of Deirdre and Cuchulain, that there were schools and assemblies of bards, art and science, manufactures, and a flourishing commerce, for England to destroy. But like all reactions against injustice, this one has gone too far. To depict Ireland as a hero-martyr among nations and England as a blackhearted and calculating villain is

ridiculously to travesty the facts. The men who stood for England in a time of desperate peril, men like St. Leger and the elder Sidney, Mountjoy and Grey of Wilton, were, to put it very mildly, in no whit the moral inferiors of the Geraldines and Fitzmaurices and O'Neills: Spenser himself was neither a fool nor a liar. The immense body of first-hand evidence as to the slovenliness and unreliability of the ordinary Irishman is not all to be brushed aside as part of a sinister conspiracy to take away a nation's character. We have only to read of the impression made in London by the unkempt and disgusting state of Shane O'Neill's retinue, of ploughs tied to the tails of horses, or such descriptions as Andrew Trollope's of a typical Irish family, "Mr., or Mrs., or dame, men-servants, maid-servants—women servants I should have said, for I think there be no maids—guests, strangers and all," sleeping together in a room not so good as an English pigsty, to realize certain grave and obvious defects in Irish civilization. It is this same complacent slovenliness that even now is often the first thing to strike the English visitor about Irish life.

It has been the curse of Irish history that their fundamental indiscipline, whose origin we have already traced to the long isolation of Ireland from Roman influence as well as to certain defects of the Celtic temperament, has made Irishmen not only the most difficult of people to deal with, but has also contributed to their fatal incapacity for combining among themselves. Certainly England had done all she could to aggravate the constant and meaningless feuds between clan and clan; the temptation to simplify the problem of government by allowing, in De Ufford's words, one knave to cut off another, was too obvious to be resisted. But the success that attended this policy was due to the fact that with an Irish chieftain, despite a real and abiding consciousness of nationality, it was his family that came first. Add to this that the typical Irish leader was a man with whom it was hard to come to a permanent understanding, because of his unreliability. The English record of foul play is bad enough in all conscience, but English treachery was a crude and amateur thing beside the elaborate falsity of James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, who pressed the sword point of the English governor to his bosom in token of a submission which was only meant to gain time, or the Earl of Tyrone, who had the magnificent effrontery to submit to the council at Dublin, as a token of good faith, the offer of Philip of Spain to help in a rebellion, an offer of which Tyrone had every intention of availing himself.

As in so many of our dealings with Ireland, the English govern-

ment appears to have started with really beneficent intentions, according to its own lights. The cautious Henry VII had pursued a policy not dissimilar to that often advocated nowadays for dealing with the Irish trouble. He left the greater part of the island to itself, and concentrated his forces and government on the "bridge-head" or Pale round Dublin. Henry VIII had, for some time, proceeded on these lines, and adopted what seemed the sensible expedient of governing Ireland by means of the great Anglo-Irish house of Fitzgerald. This had a modified success, despite the tendency of the Fitzgeralds to use their power to the disadvantage of rival families. But it became impossible when, at the crisis of the Reformation, the Fitzgerald Earl of Desmond was found to be carrying on a promising intrigue with the Emperor to transfer his allegiance, all of which was as much a part of the family game as had been Dermot's calling in of Strongbow. This was followed by the detention of the Lord Deputy, and a desperate rebellion of his son on the report, ingeniously concocted by the rival family of Butler, of the father's execution. It was evident that Henry must, for his own safety, bring Ireland under some sort of government.

His intentions appear to have been of the best. If monasteries were confiscated, it was no more than was done in England, and the Irish Church at this time showed even less signs of life than the English. A commission was appointed to make careful enquiry into the facts before proceeding to action, and the man whom Henry appointed to carry out the policy finally decided upon, Sir Anthony St. Leger, was a tolerant and, for that age, broad-minded man. Henry accepted from the Irish Parliament the title of King of Ireland, and proceeded to inaugurate the new regime by a carefully thought out scheme of conciliation. Nothing could have been more plausible than his intention of confirming the ruling houses in possession of their lands by sound feudal titles, and making them loyal subjects by conferring honours upon them. Nothing, we say, could have been more plausible and nothing more successful in appearance, for the chiefs submitted themselves, renounced the Pope and gave their allegiance to Henry and his policy with all the apparent goodwill in the world.

Unfortunately this scheme fell under the curse of all English schemes to conciliate Ireland. England meant well, but she did not understand Ireland, she never even dreamed of the necessity of understanding her. She meant to be kind and just, but it was kindness and justice towards a people whom she regarded it as her

mission to redeem from their native savagery. That the forcing of feudal tenure on the chiefs was flying in the face of the ancient tribal law was not likely to be appreciated by men to whom that law was "a damnable law that is no law, hateful to God and man". The policy of conciliating the Irish went along with a foolish attempt to civilize the Irish, which meant turning Irishmen into Englishmen. The chief of the O'Neills, for instance, when he was made Earl of Tyrone, was expected to renounce his family name and to enforce the English language upon his dependents. Vexatious and utterly ineffective legislation was passed insulting the Irish by proscribing their language, customs and dress.

We shall not attempt to follow in detail the results of this policy, how first one and then another chieftain was in revolt, and how the English government, never knowing whom to trust nor where the next rebellion might start, gradually lost its patience and temper and passed from conciliation to the extremity of violence and cruelty. It is a story on which neither Englishmen nor Irishmen can look back with pride. Not even patriotism can make anything but a thorough-paced scoundrel of such a leader as Shane O'Neill, or can find so much to admire in the disconnected efforts of men who were fighting more for their own hands than their country's cause, and who, if they had succeeded in driving out the English, would certainly have been at each other's throats with an equal ferocity. Mrs. Green, whose work in revealing the true greatness of Irish civilization cannot be overpraised, but who is frankly a partizan, quotes an Irish poem of this time that reveals only too sadly what was the real cause of Ireland's undoing, the fact that Ireland to herself did not rest true:

> "The race of the O'Briens of Banba under Morrough,
> Their covenant is with the King of England,
> They have turned, and sad is the deed,
> Their back on the inheritance of their fathers,"

and so on through the mournful catalogue of the faithlessness of Irishmen to Ireland. A terrible discipline was needed, the most terrible, almost, a people has ever had to undergo, to bring Ireland into effective unity as a nation.

As if it were not enough for the English government to be faced with unceasing tribal rebellion, a new menace was imported from abroad. The Counter Reformation put out its tentacles as far as what was henceforth, and for the first time, to be in a true sense the Pope's Green Island. Jesuit missionaries, who took their lives in their hands, began to arrive at the very time when the contempt

for Irish susceptibilities displayed by the official Protestant Church made the Roman faith a symbol of the resistance to the foreigner. Irishmen were united, in a way they never had been before, by the religious bond. It is significant that when the "Tower" or "Queen's" Earl of Desmond was, in 1600, taken out of the captivity in which he had been reared, and presented to his people, all went well until he went to the Protestant Church, when the acclamations turned to hooting. The faith of Rome had become the symbol of loyalty in Ireland.

It must be remembered that England was, at this time, a small nation standing alone not only against a vast empire, but against the whole force of the Counter Reformation that threatened to sweep Europe. She was fighting desperately for her life, and it seemed as if the chances must be against her—there is, among the Cecil papers, a document written two or three years after the Armada by an English Catholic in which the opinion is expressed that England must be beaten in the long run by the mere vastness of Philip's resources. Philip was behind the Jesuit attempts to convert Ireland, he was in league with every rebel. More than once Spanish troops were actually landed in Ireland. The Irish were glad enough of such assistance, though when the Spaniards were bottom dog, and driven ashore by the storms that scattered the Armada, they displayed not the slightest hesitation in murdering and plundering all they could catch. Ireland was certainly the most vulnerable point in England's defences, and if Philip had only displayed a little more energy or insight, might have been the grave of her independence.

This may go far to explain, though not to justify, the desperate severity of England's methods. Conciliation, so it must have seemed, had been tried and failed. No one, from Spenser downwards, doubted that we were dealing with heretics and savages, for whom firm government, and the firmer the better, was the only cure. The war that blazed out, now in this part of the land, now in that, assumed a more and more horrible character. Irish civilization was treated, in the best of conscience, as an evil thing to be rooted out by any means. War was waged on Irish commerce, on Irish education, on Irish speech, and on Irish minstrelsy. The wearing of the native frieze shirt constituted a crime. In harmony with Spenser's cold-blooded advice, the method was adopted of starving the "wild Irish" out of existence; dreadful pictures have been drawn of the poor wretches crawling forth on their hands and knees,

and flocking to any clump of watercress as to a feast. The English commanders were men who did not know mercy; even the Spaniards of the Armada who fell into English hands were butchered without remorse. What is worse, these representatives of England were more than once ready so far to compromise the honour of their country as to resort to deliberate lying and treachery in order to get rid of inconvenient opponents.

A new element was introduced into the struggle that is symptomatic not only of the individualism that marked Elizabeth's reign, but also of the progress made by the capitalist spirit. The system of plantations was started, by which confiscated Irish land was conferred on English adventurers, who therefore assumed an interest in defending it. A new and unhappily lasting element was now introduced into the distressful history of Ireland, that of the alien landlord. Whenever the tide of rebellion swept over any part of the land, the people naturally murdered the intruders and gutted their houses. Such a fate overtook Spenser's house, and though the poet himself escaped, part of the *Faerie Queene* was destroyed.

On the whole, the English conducted the struggle with ability and courage. There were certainly mistakes and blunders, and there were times when the Irish, if they had only been capable of proper combination, might have won. Had, for instance, the Ulster chiefs came promptly to the aid of Desmond's rebellion, or Tyrone marched on Dublin after his victory over Sir Henry Bagenal near Armagh, the tale of Robert Bruce might have been repeated in Ireland. But the Irish were not like the Lowland Scots, with their Northumbrian leaven, who made Bruce's efforts effective. The end came when Elizabeth appointed, as the successor to the incompetent Earl of Essex, an able and ruthless soldier in the person of Lord Mountjoy, who, by a system of fortified posts similar in principle to Kitchener's blockhouses in South Africa, at length made the conquest of Ireland a reality it had never been before. But the hatred of England was now deeply planted, along with the love of Rome, in the hearts of Irishmen. With these unconquered, England's task was yet to be performed.

CHAPTER IV

DIVINE RIGHT

1

What the Elizabethans Lacked

So complete was the success of the Elizabethans in what they set out to do, so dazzling their triumph over the leagued forces of the Counter Reformation, so harmoniously did they celebrate the joy, the variety and the splendour of living, that we are apt to forget the heights to which they never even aspired to soar, the depths of character that they had no plummet to sound. And without abating one jot of thankfulness or praise for these our fathers of a sweet and victorious England, it behoves us, who would understand the meaning and even the necessity of what followed, to realize just in what this incompleteness consisted.

It is said that it was Elizabeth who induced Shakespeare to violate his artistic conscience by depicting Falstaff in love. Critics may prove to their repeated satisfaction the Philistine nature of this request, but the result was an immortally funny play, and if Her Majesty had any hand in providing us with the spectacle of Sir John in the buck-basket, we ought to be duly grateful. But can we imagine Shakespeare being set the task of depicting St. Francis, or Elijah, or Prometheus? It is hard to imagine him depicting a saint or even a very convincing fanatic, and when he has to present a hero, it is on his weakness and not on his strength that he prefers to dwell. His Caesar is, contrary to the almost universal opinion of modern critics, a subtle and sympathetic study, but it is the study of a hero who has come to take his own heroism for granted, to trust in his star and, in undergraduate parlance, get above himself. The nearest approach to a hero in his strength is Henry V, and, great as he is, he is not altogether so convincing as Macbeth or Hamlet or his old friend Falstaff. The glory of Shakespeare is in his tender and all-embracing humanity; his weakness consists in his being all too human.

In Spenser, who was mildly inclined towards Puritanism and whose masterpiece was as deliberately a moral allegory as Bunyan's, we certainly find an advance upon the frivolous and cynical Ariosto, the child of an Italy already politically and spiritually enslaved, and who, in point of technique, provided Spenser with much of his inspiration. Una with her lamb, the angels like flying pursuivants hastening to our succour, the temperate Guyon, the courteous Calidore, all these are the lovely and pleasant creations of a noble mind, but they miss the deadly earnestness of the tinker's dream. Making every allowance for the pageantry and *joie de vivre* with which Elizabethan thought naturally clothed itself, there is a profound difference of spiritual quality between

"A gentle knight was pricking on the plain"

and "I dreamed and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hands and a great burden on his back. I looked and saw him open the book and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying, what shall I do?"

Elizabethan love, even when clothed with strange forms and conceits, is at heart as simple and as little introspective as the spring songs of birds. In this, as in every other human concern, it is dangerous to generalize absolutely, and some of Shakespeare's sonnets may be cited as conspicuous exceptions to the rule, but it is seldom that Elizabethan poets attain such a concentrated passion or one so charged with thought as, for instance, Browning's invocation to his dead wife or the best of Shelley's lyrics. So it is, too, in Elizabethan painting; Hilliard is graceful and decorative to the highest degree, but he does not tear the very soul out of his sitter, as Rembrandt was to do. Nor, even allowing for the difference of instrumental resources, can it be claimed that Elizabethan music, for all its interlaced sweetness, has quite the height or the depth of Bach and Beethoven. Life was, to the Elizabethan, like the ocean on which he was beginning to assert his mastery; he knew all the changing hues of her face, all the storms that roused her to madness, she had borne him to Eldorados in the West and to spice and coral islands in the East, but he neither cared nor dreamed of the dark and stormless depths far beneath the keel.

Elizabeth was no goddess nor the Elizabethans supermen; it is only to admit them human to say that with so much done they left much yet to do. It was enough for Elizabeth to unite the nation

in the face of the enemy, to give it a wise and efficient government, and to get that government obeyed. It was no time for ideal solutions. The religious compromise on which she took her stand may not have been logical, but it worked. To produce a union of hearts and conviction was beyond the power even of a Gloriana, but it was at least possible to insist upon a standard of external conformity, and to strike down anyone who embarrassed the nation so far as to call that standard in question.

Though it was religion that set Europe ablaze, few governments have been swayed to so small an extent by religious motives as that of which Burleigh and Walsingham were the guiding spirits, few Churches have been so respectably Laodicean as that presided over by the worthy Archbishop Parker. It concerned them far less that wine could not be changed to blood than that raw English wool could be made into fine cloth without going to Flanders. Elizabeth's own views on the Sacrament are contained in that famous hedging rhyme :

> " He was the Word that spake it,
> He took the bread and brake it,
> And what that Word did make it,
> I do believe and take it."

To set their Church agog with spiritual excitement and fervour was the last thing that either Elizabeth or Parker wanted to do. Any tendency to exuberant and possibly subversive eloquence on the part of the clergy was damped effectually enough by providing them with a selection of official homilies of formidable length and unexceptionable dullness, and when a controversy rose about wearing surplices, the Archbishop procured a reverend gentleman kindly to stand as mannequin, in order that there might be no doubt at all what was the correct uniform for a parson to wear during service.

This policy of external conformity was defensible, and in fact succeeded as a temporary expedient in a time of crisis, but in the long run it was doomed to failure. The Reformation had let loose spirits that the royal authority could not bind. Men had not escaped from the Egyptian bondage of Rome to make their abode in the wilderness ; nothing less than the Promised Land would satisfy them, nothing less than the glorious liberty of the sons of God. They wished the soul to stand naked in the presence of its Saviour, without any intermediary When they saw the old hierarchy and the old vestments of Rome retained in a modified form by the Church of England, devout Protestants began to think that the work of Reformation was only half completed. This was a state of mind

of which Elizabeth and Burleigh realized little and cared less. For their part they had other things to think about than getting right with God. And while the Spanish menace lasted, they had behind them the enthusiastic loyalty of most Englishmen.

The first stirrings of Puritanism, as we may call the whole movement to carry the Reformation to a more logical conclusion than that inculcated by the Church of England, were of somewhat divergent and uncertain tendency. Englishmen, even when they are trying to be logical, do not take to it readily. The first considerable Protestant murmuring was against the wearing of surplices, the filthy garments of Antichrist, as it seemed to the zealots, the harmless courtesy, as it must have seemed to Parker, that God's minister owes to God on coming into His house. Then there was the movement backed by Archbishop Grindal at the cost of his suspension, for quickening spiritual life among the clergy by "prophesyings", or meetings for the purpose of practising the art of preaching. This was a breach of discipline, a way round the Book of Homilies, and it was better that parsons should be as dull as their sermons than they should get out of hand by becoming dangerously interesting.

It was about the time of the Armada that the revolt against the Church took formidable shape in a series of coarse and slashing attacks on the Bishops by an author who took the significant *nom de plume* of Martin Marprelate. This had the not unnatural, if unchristian effect of imparting a vindictive tinge to the already stern determination of these prelates to uphold their authority. This, it must be noted, was a political and not primarily a religious attitude. At this time the Church had by no means made up her own mind how far she meant to go with Calvin in matters of faith and doctrine. Grindal's successor, Archbishop Whitgift, an able but narrow martinet, was, to put it in modern terms, an extreme Low Churchman as regards doctrine and an equally extreme High Churchman as regards discipline. The authorities were determined to stand no nonsense; legislation was stiffened up; Puritans as well as Catholics made acquaintance with the rope and quartering block.

This repression had some effect in masking the symptoms of revolt, but it was worse than useless as a means for eradicating it. Its effect was to make it more irreconcilable. Hitherto there had been nothing like a fixed and definite Puritan movement, or even any general determination to break with the Church. Most Puritans hoped, up to the time of the Hampton Court Conference on the

accession of James I, to carry the Church along with them. But already at the end of Elizabeth's reign two definite streams of tendency had begun to show themselves, the Presbyterian, under Cartwright, who so far abated his vehemence as to be allowed to end his days in peace and honour at Warwick, and the Independent or Congregational, at this time called Brownist, after a leader who finally gave up kicking against the Anglican pricks and accepted an Anglican benefice. The point of difference was that the Presbyterians wished to substitute for the sovereignty of a despotically organized Church that of a democratically elected Kirk, organized in a hierarchy of assemblies or ecclesiastical soviets, as in Scotland, but the Independents went further still in accepting the absolute spiritual sovereignty of each congregation, much in accordance with the practice of the Primitive Church.

These differences are, after all, comparatively unimportant. What the Puritans were really aiming at was a change of spirit, affecting the whole of national life. Instinctively they felt that the Elizabethan compromise had failed to convert or discipline the heart of the nation, however splendid its effects might be to the outward eye. They were aiming, though they did not realize it, at that defect which too often blurred the distinction between a patriot and a pirate, which paralyzed our counter-offensive against Spain, which caused our prose to sprawl and lose itself in the maze of its own conceits, which limited the genius even of a Shakespeare and made Bacon, the brightest philosopher of his age, also the meanest of mankind. What should it profit England to gain, if it might be, the whole world and lose her own soul? It was to the soul that the Puritans addressed their message.

There was a feature of the Puritan movement that made its progress of ominous import to the government. It was, in theory and spirit, Radical, it harked back to Calvin and not to Luther in its attitude to constituted authority. Every religion, even the despotically organized Roman Catholicism, will find excellent reasons for opposing heretic or persecuting rulers, but it is the very nature of Protestantism to protest, it is a short cry from democracy in the Church to democracy in the State. Nor was example wanting to confirm theory. Only across the Tweed, Englishmen had the spectacle of the Calvinist system in full working order and the King treated as the slave of the Kirk by men like Melville and Buchanan. Of even greater importance was coming to be the influence of Calvinist Holland, that loose federation of Burgher oligarchies with the

Stadtholder the mere official of the States. It was thither that the Puritan leaders and flocks retired when things became too hot at home; there grew up English Non-conforming communities, and thence set forth the Pilgrim Fathers. Add to this the training in the extreme forms of Protestantism that exiles from our shores had acquired in Mary's day, and the influence of swarms of Huguenots and Netherlanders who found refuge and a permanent home in England throughout the reign of Elizabeth.

Already in the full blaze of Elizabeth's glory, might have been heard the first murmurs of the storm that was to burst upon the monarchy and overwhelm the next but one of her successors. One preacher, fired by the example of kindred spirits in Scotland, had the audacity to denounce the Queen to her face from the pulpit, as "an untamed heifer, that would not be ruled by God's people, but obstructed His discipline". Despite every effort to preserve her independence of Parliament by a rigid economy, Elizabeth's relations with her Commons were marked by increasing friction, which was only prevented from culminating in an explosion by her extraordinary tact over the grievance of monopolies. Audacious speech was heard within the precincts of Westminster Palace, one member, called Peter Wentworth, a sturdy gospeller, bluntly asserting that the law is above the Queen, and that it is dangerous for her to oppose herself to her people. "Nay! I will discharge my conscience and my duties to God, my prince and country. So certain it is, Mr. Speaker, that none is without fault, no, not our noble Queen, sith her Majesty hath committed great fault, yea, dangerous faults to herself."

The very hour of Elizabeth's triumph, when God blew with his winds and scattered the Armada, struck, if she had only known it, the knell of her system. The danger from the Counter Reformation had called that system into being, the threat of invasion and slavery had united the nation in its support; now that it had succeeded so far beyond expectation the need for it was withdrawn. The preservation of the State was no longer the absorbing interest; men had time to look about them and think a little of their souls, and of harvesting the full fruit of the Reformation. They no longer only asked whether the government would be able to preserve their liberties against Spain, but also whether Englishmen could maintain their liberties against the government. And to make matters worse, Elizabeth was now committed to what she had bent all her Tudor ingenuity to avoid, a national war, for which some money, at any rate,

would be required. It is a pathetic sight to watch the splendid old Queen gradually losing touch with her subjects, finding herself lonely and a stranger in the midst of a people that had grown up around her, without sympathy or understanding for the worldly ideal she had inherited from the Renaissance. There were some—such is human gratitude—who actually welcomed her death.

2

The Kingcraft of Solomon

The peaceful accession of James, the sixth of Scotland and first of England, on Elizabeth's death, to the rule of the whole British Isles, was the greatest triumph of policy ever achieved by an English statesman, but the brain in which it had been conceived had been lifeless for nearly a century. What Henry VIII and Somerset, no less than the first and third Edwards, and before them the Emperor Severus and the Governor Agricola, had wasted blood and treasure untold in attempting, had been achieved by the far-seeing diplomacy of Henry VII, who predicted that even if the effect of his daughter's marriage were to give the English throne to a Scottish King, the greater must inevitably draw the less. Nothing, however, could have more assuaged the intense Scottish patriotism than the fact that it was their own Stuart Dynasty that had made a peaceful conquest of England. The English union with Scotland, which was to wait another century for its full consummation, was, in fact, as classic an instance of how nations should come together, as the conquest of Ireland is an instance to the contrary.

Once she was in her grave, the system of life and polity for which Elizabeth had stood begun to show unmistakable signs of having outlived its usefulness. It is doubtful whether even she could have maintained its glory undimmed, and her successor was a sovereign immeasurably her inferior for all practical purposes. James was, indeed, far from being the fool he is sometimes depicted. He was not only a scholar and man of letters, but had shown a capacity for preserving his life and interests upon that *siege perilous*, the Scottish throne, which might have aroused the envy of his mother and his five namesakes who had gone before him. To understand the man, his ability and his failures, it is necessary to regard him not as if he had dropped from the Northern clouds on the death of Elizabeth, but as a hard-bitten and experienced King who must

have considered that what he did not know of the technique and seamy side of his business was not worth knowing.

Few men, who were not Kings of Scotland, have been confronted with a task so thankless and so difficult as that to which James grew up, and which he accomplished with so large a measure of temporary success. The Scottish nobles were as disloyal as they had been in the time of Sir Robert Graeme, and instead of the disreputable but subservient Church of the earlier Stuarts, there was now the terrible democracy of the Kirk to be reckoned with. Between this Scylla and Charybdis the unfortunate King had to steer the best course he could. The best possible was a series of violent zigzags. Seldom had a King been treated with so little respect for his office. If he accepted the hospitality of one of his nobles, there was a fair chance that his host might turn out to be his jailer or even his murderer. Twice he was held a prisoner, and the country seethed with plots to get hold of him in order to use, banish, or make away with him.

As for the preachers, nothing less than tyranny over the bodies and souls of the King and his subjects would satisfy them. They went to the utmost lengths of revolutionary theory and practice. Any minister who liked to get up into the pulpit and pour out his venom against the civil authority constituted himself the speaking trumpet of the Holy Ghost, and to take exception to him was the unforgivable sin. Even when the King's mother was lying under sentence of death at Fotheringay, one of these inspired saints dared force his way into the pulpit in order to denounce to James's face his very modest request that prayer should be offered for her safety as well as her conversion. On another occasion, when James was so far provoked as to tell the preacher either to talk sense or sit down, " I tell thee man," was the answer, " I will neither talk sense nor sit down." Andrew Melville, the successor of Knox in the Kirk's fighting leadership, on one famous occasion caught hold of his sovereign's sleeve and called him God's silly vassal. George Buchanan, James's tutor, published a book on the relations of the King with his subjects, which not only reduced the King to practical impotence, but gave his subjects the right to kill him if he misbehaved.

The result of this severe apprenticeship in the art of governing is easily discernible in James's career and disposition. He became one of the most cunning and skilful of practitioners in the art of playing off men against each other. Neither preachers nor nobles were able to get the better of him in the long run. He would agree

with anybody or yield to anything, but he generally succeeded, by crooked ways or straight, in making his will prevail. At the time he came to the English throne, he was as firm in the saddle as any King of Scotland could aspire to be. He had even succeeded in saddling the Kirk with a hierarchy of bishops, and he was generally sensible enough to see that the strength of Calvinism was in its lowest units, the congregations and presbyteries, and that it was safest to attack it at the top and in its central organization. It was easier to muzzle a general assembly than to force insignificant changes of ceremonial on a parish kirk. The Articles of Perth which in his old age he tried to impose on the Kirk were a lapse from this wise policy, a lapse in which he was fatally imitated by his son.

Unfortunately, this genius for self-preservation was not the only result of James's early troubles. It is only too probable that the lack of respect and even the violence that he everywhere encountered were the cause of his own lack of respect for himself. Never was a King so grotesquely unkingly. He was a buffoon in purple. He once publicly enjoined his subjects not to think of him as an irresolute ass; at one critical moment in his dealings with the English Parliament, he likened them to a cow trying to cut off her own tail, the cow's tail being his own Sacred Majesty. The Spanish ambassador bullied him and the Duke of Buckingham patronized him in a way that might have made Elizabeth rise from her grave. In his court he was as ridiculous a figure as any old buffer of the lowest comedy. The fact that he had never known either of his parents, and the unsympathetic atmosphere of his upbringing, gave him an almost pathetic craving to be mothered, or rather fathered, that accounts for the ascendancy that a certain virile and confident type of man was able to gain over him, a weakness readily understandable in the light of modern psychology.

But the iron that had entered into his soul gave him a hatred almost physical of the things that had embittered his adolescence. His dislike of the whole atmosphere of Elizabethan adventure, his persecution of Raleigh, were no doubt due to unconscious memories of the proud and full-blooded nobles who had made his life wretched in old days, the Gowries and Bothwells. The benediction on peacemakers was one that he echoed from his heart; he had a dislike of rough men and rough ways, he leaned to finesse, and may almost be styled the father of modern political corruption. Above all things he hated those stern and austere men who were in the habit of comparing him to Ahab, Herod, and Jeroboam, his consort to

Herodias, and his favourites to Haman. Try as he would to be fair, he destested the whole atmosphere of Calvinism, except in so far as it acknowledged the royal supremacy in Church matters. It is thus that he professed to arbitrate between Churchman and Puritan at the conference, on the opening of his reign, at Hampton Court: "How they (the Scottish Presbyterians) used the poor lady my mother is well known, and how they dealt with me in my minority. . . . If once you were out and they in, I know what would become of my supremacy; for, 'No bishop, no king.'"

He had been so snubbed and his power so belittled that he had come, by a natural reaction, to exalt his office in theory as much as he demeaned it in practice. Even when he was maundering about the cow and her tail, he exalted himself to nothing less than godhead. "The state of monarchy," he wrote for his son's benefit, "is the supremest thing on earth; for Kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God's throne, but even by God Himself they are called gods." Despite all the inconveniences of Scottish monarchy, this was in perfect harmony with the principles of that Roman law that Scotland had adopted for her own. James was, in his own eyes, the divine Caesar; it was treason, he held, to suggest that he was subject to the law. The English Common Law, whose spirit is that of the English Constitution, he did not understand and could not sympathize with. When he left his turbulent Northern realm, with its sermons and mutinies, for the safe and splendid court and the loyal Church of England, he must have thought he had found a veritable King's paradise. It never occurred to him that he was entering an atmosphere less favourable, in some respects, to monarchial pretensions than that which he had left. On his way to London he did a very simple and natural thing, but one which Elizabeth, at the height of her glory, would not have dared to do. At Newark, a common thief was caught among the crowd of sightseers. James had that thief strung up out of hand, and thereby started the monarchy on an inclined plane that led to another execution in front of the palace at Whitehall.

His theory and consequent practice of government followed from his upbringing and limitations. The art of governing a people was a matter mainly of technique and finesse; it was, to use James's own expression, "Kingcraft." Foreign powers as well as one's own subjects were like pawns on a chessboard or pieces to be fitted into a puzzle. The divine monarch was, or ought to be, a specialist in his business, and as such, allowed a free hand, reasonable funds,

and the appointment of his own staff. And of Kingcraft, thus conceived, James was no contemptible exponent. If, on the subject of witches, his views were as detestable as those of the Kirk itself, in other ways he was even in advance of his age. He pressed on the beneficent project of a union between his two kingdoms. He was naturally tolerant and preferred argument to force, though when he was crossed he could display a donnish partisanship which once even extended to the kicking of a recalcitrant Anabaptist. He had also the honourable ambition of being a Prince of Peace. The Elizabethan jingoes who, on grounds partly religious and partly acquisitive, wanted to continue *à outrance* what was now an unnecessary and demoralizing war with Spain, were given to understand that the days of licensed freebooting were over, except for those of them who found the Barbary Deys more congenial masters than the King of England. That James had grasped at least one secret of the Tudors is shown by a passage in Hacket's *Life of Archbishop Williams*, in which his reason for refusing to be drawn into a war with Spain is given as the very shrewd one that it would make him dependent on Parliament, who would want to change the Church, the laws, the court, and the ministers.

However insufficient James's idea of a King's duties may have been, he could at least claim to be supported in it by the wisest statesman of his time, and one of the wisest men of all time, Francis Bacon. For Bacon and his master were at one with Machiavelli in regarding Kingcraft as the technique of managing men, according to principles applicable to all civilized communities, and capable of being discovered by induction from history. It is only because Bacon's intellect was more considerable than that of James that the observations of his essays are of abiding interest, while those of the King's *Basilicon Doron*, though the best exposition of the political art written by any English sovereign except Alfred, are practically forgotten. And yet, in certain directions, James shows the more enlightened spirit of the two. For where the King was peaceful, the minister was a very Bernhardi for militarism. "For Empire and greatness," says Bacon, in discoursing of the true greatness of kingdoms, "it importeth most that a nation do possess arms as their principal honour, study, and occupation. Nietzsche himself could have said no more for the good war, that sanctifies every cause, than Bacon, who compares civil war to the heat of a fever, but foreign war to the heat of exercise, that keeps the body politic in good condition. He counsels states to have "laws and customs,

which may reach forth unto them just occasions, *as may be pretended*, for war ".

As far as the technique of Kingcraft was concerned, Bacon must be acknowledged a past master. He was wise enough to see that increase in territory can just as easily do harm as good, and that its advisability depends on the circumstances of each particular case. But as for England, he shows, with prophetic intuition, how every circumstance combines to render her ripe for expansion; geographically, the sea safeguards her from invasion—and Bacon was never tired of impressing upon Englishmen the importance of its command—the prowess of her people renders them capable of holding far more territory than they at present possess, the nucleus of her prospective Empire is larger than either Macedon or Rome, in short, " here is potentially body enough for Nabuchodonosor's tree, if God should have so ordained."

And yet, for all his vision of her Empire, Bacon had hardly any at all of England herself, what she stood for, what was in her heart and trying to find expression. His idea of statesmanship was not organic but mechanical; he regarded men as if they were calculable units, capable of being managed by experts. His New Atlantis, his ideal commonwealth, though we do not know the details of its government, had not arisen, like a Gothic cathedral, to express the people's will, but by the contrivance of one wise legislator, a super-craftsman in politics.

To deny to a man like Bacon, who not only served England as faithfully as his own petty selfishness allowed him, but foresaw with startling accuracy the possibility of her world empire, the title of patriot, might seem paradoxical. And yet nothing can be more certain than that he was never a patriot in the sense of Shakespeare or even of Elizabeth. His was a measured and calculating love, and therefore a love without vision. He utterly failed to understand what England was and therefore how she was to be managed. He was a lawyer, and yet at variance with the spirit of English law, which it was his constant effort to bend to the exaltation of the prerogative. What idea he had of liberty or of the rights of the individual is shown by the way in which he personally supervised the torture of a poor old clergyman called Peacham, whose sole offence was that he had written an unpublished sermon supposed to be of a disloyal tendency. It is not surprising that in domestic politics he could descend from the methods of the statesman to those of the wirepuller. He flattered his master into a false security, because

he himself could not discern the signs of the time. On the eve of James's second and most mutinous Parliament, he complacently informed him that the opposition would be much weaker than in the first, on account of various leaders, whom he specified, having been nobbled in one way or another. In 1618 he celebrated New Year's Day by a fulsome panegyric of James's government, which might almost have been written of the New Atlantis itself. And Bacon was right about the country advancing in material prosperity, but wrong in failing to perceive that the life is more than the meat.

He may in a sense be called a statesman of the Tudor tradition. He believed in a state with a strong monarchy and a prosperous people, each observing his due place and fulfilling his duty therein. His ideal monarch was the cool-headed and cold-hearted Henry VII. But he missed the practical and implied democracy or, to put it more accurately, Englishry, which tempered the most autocratic proceedings of Henry VIII and Elizabeth. He leaned towards the continental theories of sovereignty which had found an exponent of genius in the Frenchman, Jean Bodin, and which subordinated all rights and liberties to the authority of a strong central government. Elizabeth and her father may have been autocratic in many of their proceedings, but they were English enough not to be very logical or consistent about it. James and Bacon were fatally logical, James because he was a Scot, and Bacon because he was a philosopher, or because the kingdom on which his heart was set was one of mankind armed with reason and establishing an Empire, such as the world had never yet seen, over recalcitrant nature. In his soul he was a citizen of a New Atlantis become world-wide, and only the baser part of his strangely complex nature was at the service of his natural country. That may partly explain the paradox of his greatness as a philosopher and his comparative failure to appreciate the political problems of his own day. His mind's eye, if we may so put it, was long-sighted.

3

The Liberation of Science

We look back over the years when James I was King, and think of them as a period of constitutional struggle or, if we enlarge our view, we see the curtain rung up on the most terrible of all European wars, or perhaps we are attracted by such coloured and tragic spectacles as that of Guy Fawkes standing to his post in the cellar,

knowing, almost to a certainty, that the game was up, or of Raleigh's little squadron seen like specks upon the waste of the Atlantic, that sea whiff, between dungeon and death, of the old buccaneering freedom. And doubtless these things, as the song says of gunpowder treason, should never be forgot, but deeper than all of them was a process so silent and intangible that it made no noise in the controversies of the time and has scarcely found its way into history. This was nothing less than the gradual entering of man into his lordship over nature, which, whether it lead to paradise on earth or universal suicide, is a fact of incomparable significance.

The Renaissance had started mankind on a new quest for freedom and power, which was paid for by a continual lowering of man's dignity in the sense that from imagining himself the centre and his mind the arbiter of the universe, he came, with every fresh conquest, to a fresh discovery of the insignificance of himself and his planet in the scheme of things. "I stoop to conquer," might be the watchword of advancing humanity. But this conquest of nature through humility was to be slow beyond the imagining of the first humanists. They talked of bursting bonds when it was frequently a question of exchanging one bondage for another, or as if a prisoner should burst the door of his cell only to find himself in the locked corridor of the prison. So it was with those who invoked the classics as an escape from the dogmas of the Church.

When the main interest of life shifted from heaven to the temporal universe and men began to look about them, they were, in every direction, hampered by authority. Though Plato had come to rival Aristotle in esteem, Aristotle still exercised such an authority, both as a thinker and a scientist, that investigators of the Renaissance were more inclined to study "the Philosopher" than nature. This was doubly unfortunate, because Aristotle, though he had been an indefatigable collector of facts, considered it incumbent on him to fit these into the prepared framework of his philosophy, and instead of letting nature speak for herself had applied to her works a standard of value born in his own mind. In medicine the common assumption was that Galen and Hippocrates had spoken the last word, and all that remained to do was to interpret them. Similarly astronomy was painfully strugging to free herself from the shackles forged by the Alexandrian Ptolemy, who had made the Earth the centre of the universe.

Two tasks, therefore, had to be performed by the scientists of the dawning age. The first was negative and consisted in releasing

inquiry from the bias imparted by authority of any sort, the second was positive, and consisted in going constantly, impartially and, as we might say, innocently to the facts. This was, in the very nature of things, the work of no one nation, but it was obvious that some nations were better situated by temperament and polity than others for being in the van of progress. Wherever the Counter Reformation extended its sway, a blight descended upon scientific freedom. Now that Rome had once again become pious and combative, her natural tendency to assert and enforce authority came into play. What was new was probably heretical and certainly unsettling. When Copernicus made the earth go round the sun he was showing the same tactless disregard for the account of creation in Genesis that Darwin was to do later. The Church was only displaying a motherly care for her children's faith by putting the sun and Copernicus into their places. When Galileo added to Copernicus's indiscretion the further enormity of constructing a telescope to discover things that the Church had forbidden to exist, it was only natural that before dealing with him by the methods of the Holy Office, a sermon should be preached to the punning text, " Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven ? " Why indeed ? Whatever there was worth knowing about Heaven was known to the Church ; the rest was not Christian. It is no wonder that the great order of the Jesuits was strict in its cult of Thomas Aquinas, " who taught everything and knew nothing."

England, on the other hand, was in an exceptionally favourable position for the liberation of thought. Her victory over the Counter Reformation had confirmed the work of her best medieval scholars, and there was no danger of a scholastic tyranny at her centres of learning. During Elizabeth's reign, religious motives had been less to the fore than in other countries, and, in consequence, thought was comparatively free to follow temporal things. A spirit of adventure was abroad which sent forth Englishmen on journeys to the uttermost parts of the earth, a spirit in which the desire for fabulous gain was blended with the sheer longing to penetrate into the unknown. But the unknown was not confined to the shores of distant oceans ; it was all around, it was in every man's body and mind, and the spirit that hammered at the icy doors of the North West Passage could be turned, more profitably, to the mastery of common-place and everyday things. We must think of our scientific pioneers, not as cloistered pedants, but as adventurers bound on quests as thrilling as ever excited the ardour of a Drake or a Raleigh.

Of these knights of mankind, the first English name is that of Gilbert, a physician, and son of a prosperous Colchester burgess. By years of indefatigable experiment he established on a firm basis the science of magnetism and adumbrated that of electricity. His task was simplified by his operating in a practically virgin field, and he had not like William Harvey, in the science of physiology, only to discover the truth, but to disencumber it of a weight of time-honoured error. Harvey, of Kentish yeoman stock, was, like Darwin after him, the very pattern of a scientist, and so great was his love of truth that for ten years he refrained from publishing his discovery of the circulation of the blood, in order that he might patiently test and consider it in all its bearings, surely a remarkable application of the text, " prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." It was characteristic of the English mind that its first scientific efforts should be by way of induction and experiment. It is equally characteristic of Scotland that she should have given to the world John Napier, a gentleman of good family born in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, and an active member of the General Assembly of the Kirk, who marks an epoch in mathematical development by the invention of logarithms. It is a curious fact about this Napier that he may be said to be the inventor of the Tank, for he is reported to have experimented with a metal chariot, the occupants of which could destroy their enemy by firing through loopholes.

It may perhaps seem remarkable that more of invention, in the usually accepted sense, was not the outcome of this great mental activity. The more closely we examine the records of the time, the more evidences do we see of the spirit which was to bring about the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, and yet no Watt nor Arkwright succeeds in " making good " in the early seventeenth. The conditions were, in fact, not ripe. Machine production on a large scale demands such backing of capital and accessibility of markets as that age could not supply. This idea of the tank was only one of several striking but barren anticipations of modern achievement. In Elizabeth's State Papers we find an inventor submitting the design of an arquebus which, like the modern Lee Enfield, would fire ten shots without reloading. No details are given [1] and it is evident that the Council turned it down with as little remorse as the War Office displayed in rejecting the first offer of the Lewis

[1] There is such an arquebus, together with a very efficient-looking anticipation of the pom-pom, dating from about this period, in the Doge's Palace at Venice.

Gun. But the most remarkable of all Elizabethan inventors was the Reverend William Lee, who invented a stocking frame of which all modern machinery of this kind is only a development. His fate throws much light on the ideas of the time with regard to industrial progress. Elizabeth first refused to grant a patent for his machine because the stockings were too coarsely made for her liking, and then, when Lee succeeded in presenting her with a pair of satisfactory silk ones, it was refused again in the interests of workers in the hosiery trade. Henry IV of France, perceiving what an opportunity Elizabeth had missed, invited Lee and his workers to Rouen, but Henry was murdered and none of his promises were kept to Lee, who died of a broken heart.

We are now in a position to appreciate the decisive importance of Francis Bacon as a liberator of thought. In the work of research and discovery he did, indeed, accomplish nothing that will entitle him to rank as the equal of Gilbert or of Harvey. As a practical scientist it is easy to demonstrate his limitations. His extraordinary fertility of association frequently led him to jump at hasty and unwarrantable conclusions, as when he attributed the greater heat of the summer sun in part to his passing at that time through the neighbourhood of the brighter fixed stars. Liberator as he was, he had by no means shaken himself free from arbitrary and fallacious methods of thought similar to those which he himself criticized in Aristotle; his search for the spirit or tangible essence of bodies is, for example, thoroughly medieval. The very method that he enjoins so eloquently in his *Novum Organum* for the attainment of scientific truth is fundamentally defective, and if carried out consistently would reduce all science to a task of standardized routine, and leave no scope whatever for the imagination. Bacon's idea of an organized division of scientific labour, with some men collecting facts and experimenting, and others abstracting general principles from the results, reads like a nightmare of some employee in Mr. Ford's motor works. Science was to transform the world, in his vision, in a far shorter time and by much simpler methods than the event was to verify. For indeed the progress of science has been on very different lines from those visioned by Bacon. So far from eliminating the imagination, it has shown again and again that the greatest scientist is the greatest poet, in the old, broad Greek sense of the word which is, literally, " maker," and that where there is no vision, science perishes.

It is the most striking refutation of his own theory that Bacon

himself is remembered and honoured not for his edifice of theory, but for the poetry that was in him. "Lord Bacon," says Shelley, surely no mean judge, "was a poet. His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm which satisfies the sense, no less than the almost superhuman wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect. . . . All the authors of revolutions in opinion are . . . necessarily poets as they are inventors." After all, Bacon himself has furnished the best reply to criticisms of his method. "Certainly," he says, "everything will be more ready and better fixed by our precepts. Yet," he hastens to add, "do we not affirm that no addition can be made to them; on the contrary . . . we ought to be persuaded that the art of invention can be made to grow with the inventions themselves."

Bacon may have added little to the store of any particular science; his glory was to have been the prophet and liberator of all science. Those who believe in reincarnation can plausibly conjecture that he was the first great Bacon, the Franciscan Roger, come back to earth to repeat his message to humanity in a happier time. Both of them had the same vision of a world perfected through knowledge; both of them suffered from the same limitation of hasty and improvised methods, from the ambition to compress the task of ages into the span of a lifetime. To both also was attributed, by the instinctive compliment that small minds pay to great ones, the possession of occult and magic powers. Friar Bacon's bronze head, that would tell him whatever he wanted to know, is less incredible than Francis Bacon's supposed feat of writing Hamlet, and in circles where such things are believed he is not only attributed the authorship of Marlowe and Spenser into the bargain, but the foundation of a college of initiates, which he continues to supervise from "the other side".

But in truth there was no hocus-pocus about Bacon's achievement. What he did was to demolish, with a mighty hand, the whole weight of authority that was keeping back the scientific impulse. He did for Aristotle what medieval Oxford and the Reformation had done for the schoolmen, and he sent men from the old masters to study at the feet of the mistress Nature. In contradiction to Aristotle's habit of (so Bacon put it) "dictating to nature", he enjoined the utmost humility, patience, and impartiality in the study of her works. He exposed the fallacies or "idols" of thought that stand between mankind and the truth, and if he was premature in mapping out the route, no man has ever more unerringly given voice to the spirit of the quest. While Calvinists and Catholics and Arminians were clawing and disputing with each other over the precise results of

Adam's fall, Bacon, with calm wisdom, made the whole struggle seem but as one of frogs and mice. "Man," he says, "lost at once his State of Innocence and his Empire over Creation, both of which can be partially recovered even in this life, the first by religion and faith, the second by the arts and sciences."

To sum up his whole message in the space of one short paragraph, there are, he tells us, three species or degrees of ambition. "First, that of men who are anxious to enlarge their power over their country, which is a vulgar and degenerate kind; next, that of men who strive to enlarge the power and empire of their country over mankind, which is more dignified but not less covetous; but if we were to endeavour to renew and enlarge the power and empire of mankind in general over the universe, such ambition (if it may be so termed) is both more sound and more noble than the other two. Now the empire of man over things is founded on the arts and sciences alone, for nature is only to be commanded by obeying her."

4

The Revival of the Common Law

Bacon was, at heart, a citizen of the world and of an Empire that was yet to come, and it is not surprising that he should have failed to comprehend, so well as lesser intellects, the domestic issues at stake in England. His spirit had nothing in common with that of the English Law, with its tangle of illogicalities and its obstinate insistence upon the letter of individual rights. Bacon's instinct was to bring such order as he could into this chaos by codifying it. But it was the very disorder of English Common Law that made it so impenetrable a defence of liberty, or, to put it in the more accurate medieval phrase, liberties, for the Common Law had no conception of liberty in the abstract.

Had those at the head of the government formed on the Tudor model possessed an insight exceeding our own, they would have augured ominously from the revival or resurrection of the Common Law. It had been at its lowest when Cardinal Pole was urging Henry VIII to get rid of it altogether and substitute the perfect system of Rome, when the stream of Law Reports dried up, and when the prerogative courts absorbed more and more of the business of maintaining justice. But Elizabeth's reign had seen a notable revival in this as in other things English. The burning love of England, that had impelled men to search every record of her history and to

revive every legend tending to her glory, was not likely to pass by the most distinctively English thing of all, what more than anything else had made England what she was and was to be. Thomas Smith had found most cause for patriotic pride in the superiority of English to foreign law, and his name is among the first of an unbroken succession of legal luminaries. The search for records and precedents recommenced with more ardour than ever, and, in fact, the first half of the seventeenth century may be said to be the golden age of legal research. The classics of English law, Littleton, Fortescue, Bracton, even the Anglo-Saxon Dooms, were revived and, as Maitland has said, words that rightly or wrongly were ascribed to Bracton rang in Charles's ear when he went to the scaffold."

A reverence for the letter and precedent of the law gives its colour to all the controversy between Crown and Parliament during the reigns of the first two Stuarts, and it was the most fatal weakness of James I that the Roman ideas he had imbibed in his Northern kingdom made him less than most of his English subjects fitted to appreciate the points at issue. He had, indeed, enough native canniness to realize, in a manner that his son never could, when he was up against a tough enough proposition to necessitate his giving way, but prudence is not the same thing as conviction, and James was constantly blundering into some tactless assertion of his real opinions, though he was equally capable of taking a constitutional line when it was pointed out to him by a sufficiently trustworthy authority. A book called *The Interpreter*, which asserted the absolute monarchy of the King over the laws, he caused to be suppressed, under the influence of that inheritor of the Burleigh tradition, the Cecil Earl of Salisbury. But just before this, the King had interfered on behalf of the Church courts against the Civil jurisdiction, and as not infrequently happened with him, had lost his temper, and let out his real opinions with the violence of a self-willed monarch putting down his foot. Unfortunately for himself, he had come up against a man in whom, to quote Maitland again, the Common Law had taken flesh, one whom Carlyle had characterized, in one of those phrases that reveal more than a volume by Dryasdust, as " tough old Coke on Littleton ", Edward Coke, then Chief Justice of the Common Pleas.

The duel between King and judge was historic ; each was worthy of his cause, which was, in fact, that of Rome against England, of abstract reason against concrete rights, of conscious logic against the stubborn growth of ages. The King protested that he thought

the law was founded on reason, and that the judges were not the only people who possessed it. Coke bluntly replied that the law was the " golden mete-wand and means " for trying the causes of his subjects, and that the King was not learned in the laws of England. This last insinuation was too much for the patience of the royal Solomon, and he blurted out that this was to put him under the law, which it was treason to affirm. Coke, who knew more than James about the English law of treason, was prompt to counter not with argument but with Bracton—the King was under God and the law. It was a vulgar anticlimax when a month or two afterwards the same discussion was resumed with James clenching his fists and apparently about to use them, and the Lord Chief Justice flinging himself, grovelling, on the floor at his sovereign's feet, forgetting perhaps that James could, on occasion, be as ready in controversy with these as with his hands.

It is strange that the man who stood forth as the foremost champion of English constitutional principles, should have been one so unamiable and narrow-minded as this " tough old Coke upon Littleton ". Envious, mercenary, tyrannical, in his domestic relations odious, his life proves him to have been. Even as a lawyer his mind had not the sweep and grasp of Bacon's. As an advocate, he had suffered from the defect of not being able to stick to the main point, nor to keep his temper when crossed. His conduct of the case against Raleigh is a disgusting exhibition of bullying abuse. His famous commentary upon Littleton is almost unintelligible in its lack of arrangement and of guiding principle. Coke's mind luxuriated in a jungle of uncoordinated detail. Under these circumstances it seems almost too daring a paradox to assert that this narrow intelligence and not Bacon's majestic intellect had grasped the root of the matter at issue between the King and his Kingdom. And yet Coke knew what he was about when he wrote in the copy that Bacon sent him of his masterpiece the *Novum Organum* a Latin couplet which, translated, runs, " You propose to restore the documents of the wise men of old, first restore the laws and justice."

Coke appears to be one of those instances in which an institution or profession occupies in the affections that pre-eminence which usually falls to the lot of family or friends. The law was his father and Magna Charta his mother; if he hated his wife and was heartless to his daughter, it was because he was wedded to precedent and because the only children he cared much about were his Institutes. It was the perfect sincerity and single-mindedness of his love that

accounted for the decisive influence which he exercised in shaping the course of events, and for such love as he ever excited, for it is told how, when he left the Court of Common Pleas, not only the bench, but the officers of the court and he himself were in tears. In the eyes of his countrymen he was the law, and everywhere James, in his efforts to get the country governed with rational efficiency, found him in the way. He must have been the most irritating of opponents, for he had no apparent sense of right or wrong, but only of what was or was not the law. The equity jurisdiction of Chancery had been formed to remedy some of the notorious delays and injustices of the Common Law Courts, but this did not matter to Coke; in his eyes the Common Law was the law, no matter how unjust it might be, and the Chancellor might mind his own business, which in Coke's eyes was small enough. He had already in the dramatic controversy we have recorded been at loggerheads with the Church Courts, and thus he led the counter offensive of the reviving Common Law against the prerogative jurisdiction which, in the days of its abeyance, had probably saved it from extinction by taking over its most important functions.

James found Coke as hard to get rid of as the law itself. He might clench his fists till the judge grovelled, but it was not in Coke to give over the championship of his only love. Coke might be kicked upstairs into the King's Bench, but he was soon as much of a nuisance as ever, and when the King, with a great display of anger, reduced his eleven fellow judges to obedience over a case of appointment to livings, all that he could get out of Coke was what Lord Campbell justly describes as the simple and sublime answer that he would do that which an honest and just judge ought to do. Nothing remained for it but to turn Coke off the Bench altogether, but this was no improvement, for he reappeared, more obstinate than ever, as a member of Parliament, in which his great prestige made him the most formidable leader of opposition to the government, and though the Crown could once jockey him out of a seat by pricking him for a sheriff, this was but a temporary expedient. Coke lived on into the reign of the next King, Charles, who had once thought him a charming and witty old gentleman, but who must have revised his judgment when he found Coke the very soul of that opposition which was driving him to the choice between absolute government and surrender. It was he who was mainly responsible for formulating and forcing on the King the definition of the Parliamentary case embodied in the Petition of Right. "Magna Charta," he said in

debate on this subject, "is such a fellow that he will have no sovereign."

To understand Coke's position is, then, to have the key to the great constitutional struggle that culminated in the Civil War. He was the living embodiment of the Common Law and, up to the meeting of the Long Parliament, it was to the law that both parties appealed. The Petition of Right did not set out to be new legislation, but, as Coke plainly saw, an affirmation of the principles of Magna Charta, which itself had been no more than a statement, partial enough, of an already established law. Even the most subservient of the King's judges merely sought to establish a weight of precedent on the royal side, and the King himself, Charles especially, was scrupulous to keep within the letter of the law. Perhaps Maitland is too harsh in his opinion that the fact of the Stuarts uniting against themselves such legal authorities as Coke, Selden, and Prynne is a measure of their folly and failure. It is certainly a measure of their failure, but whether, short of the actual surrender of the royal prerogative, sovereignty and the Common Law could have agreed together, must remain a matter of doubtful speculation. But certain it is that if this reconciliation had been by any means possible, the Stuarts had neither the tact nor the sympathy with their subjects to accomplish it.

The Common Law took no account of national efficiency nor of the ordinary necessities of government. It interfered in 1613 to obstruct a royal commission to enquire into and reform the corrupt administration of the navy—the country might suffer, but that was no matter for a lawyer; the King might, in a time of acute national crisis, be unable to pay or billet his soldiers—they might starve so long as the letter of the law was not infringed; Parliament might reduce government to a standstill by refusing supplies, but the King must not raise a farthing even if his faithful Commons refused to give him one. And yet these men, for all their impracticable formality, were standing for England, in the sense that the Law, with all that was good and bad in it, represented what was deepest rooted in the heart of the nation. But that need not prevent our sympathy from going out to the champions of a different ideal, men who thought that the object of government was to get the nation governed as rationally and efficiently as possible and who, in any case, were set to grapple with a task of almost superhuman difficulty.

5

The Decadence of Elizabethanism

There was the less hope of preserving the Tudor system of society, since it was evident that the governing class, which had crowned its social hierarchy, was going to pieces through sheer lack of discipline. This had been its besetting sin even in its most glorious days, but the ever pressing menace from abroad had kept it together. Now that menace was withdrawn, the Elizabethan ideal began to show unmistakable signs of having outlived its usefulness. The sea-dogs and chivalrous knights, the Drakes and Sidneys, gave place to the picturesque but ineffective Cavaliers who lost Charles I his Kingdom and his head. The Puritan movement, with its discipline of the soul, was beginning to attract to itself what was best in the nation, and the irreligiousness of the Renaissance spirit, now that the terror of the Counter Reformation no longer gave a keenness to its official Protestantism, could no longer be disguised. Something of it is wafted to us by the remarkable inscription, in the little church of Harford, on the edge of Dartmoor, which informs us that Speaker Williams " now in Heaven with mighty Jove doth reign ". The same message is unmistakably conveyed by monumental sculpture. The great men of Catholic England may have cumbered God's house with their monuments and insignia, but they did at least preserve the show of Christian humility. From their recumbent effigies the very stones cry " Jesu mercy ! "

But the tomb of Sir Francis Vere, in Westminster Abbey, is more in the spirit of the sagas than the gospels, with the four fierce-looking officers holding up the enormous slab that bears his armour and weapons. And on the tomb of Francis Halles, which is by Nicholas Stone, the contemporary in sculpture of Inigo Jones in building, we see the young gentleman sitting in the pose and armour of an Achilles, above the most boastful piece of verse that money could buy.

If we examine the literature of the time, we shall see unmistakable signs of the Elizabethan spirit having become decadent ; the divine fire is cold, and all that remains is to elaborate its forms without comprehending its spirit. The drama, which had been the crowning glory of Elizabeth's reign, begins to run unmistakably to seed in that of her successor, and the crabbed killjoy Prynne, who lost his ears for a book in which he denounced all drama as wholly corrupt and vicious, might have obtained, if not justification, at least a

plausible case if he had stuck to the court drama of Charles I's reign. The successors of Shakespeare and the popular dramatists of James I's court were Beaumont and Fletcher, and the drop is steep from supreme genius to consummate technique. Throughout the seventeenth century these men held a higher position in popular esteem than Shakespeare, for the same reason that made Pinero more popular than Ibsen at the end of the nineteenth. It would be too sweeping a generalization to say that Beaumont and Fletcher thought of nothing but their audience, an audience that was becoming less and less democratic; they were capable of rising to the heroic level, as in that scene which excited the admiration of Emerson, in which Sophocles disarms his conquerors by the nobility with which he accepts death. These are flashes of the right Elizabethan spirit, but their very contrast with the general tone of the plays only serves to mark their extreme degeneracy from the Elizabethan standard.

What in Shakespeare had been a manly Toryism becomes in Beaumont and Fletcher the most abject flunkeydom. A partial explanation of this may be that Fletcher was the son of a Bishop, but the main reason certainly was that this sort of thing was expected and went down at the court of James. Shakespeare had never been blinded by the divinity that hedges a King, but the heroes of Beaumont and Fletcher find a positive delight in grovelling, like Coke on one celebrated occasion, at the feet of Royalty. The King is a god, and it is as blasphemous to resist tyranny as it would be to question the morality of eternal punishment. The lowest depth of abjection is touched in *The Loyal Subject*, the scene of which is appropriately laid in Russia, and whose hero, the Governor of Moscow, is a masculine and more patient edition of the Patient Griselda, with no sort of hesitation in sacrificing his son's life or his daughter's honour upon the altar of his extraordinary devotion. The best of which these authors are capable is when an old officer, in *Valentinian*, under the direct orders of his sovereign, reports to him the mutinous criticisms of the troops, though he expects nothing less than a meekly accepted death as a reward for what his creators evidently consider almost superhuman audacity of speech:

> "Majesty is made to be obeyed
> And not enquired into."

We can imagine the approving smile which James condescended to bestow on sentiments so perfectly in harmony with his own.

One can see how, in Beaumont and Fletcher, the drama was ceasing to be a vehicle of national sentiment and becoming the

pastime of an aristocratic clique. These authors frankly despised and disliked the populace, and they brought upon themselves the wrath of the groundlings by guying a typical prentice lad, in a witty play which, unlike most of their others, acts well before a modern audience. These prentice lads were to have their revenge on the courtiers when they lined the hedges at Newbury and not Rupert could break them. But if Beaumont and Fletcher do not reflect England, they do reflect, with nauseating fidelity, the court of James, with its lewdness, its corruption, and its crime. Of public spirit they show not the faintest sense; a court to them is not the centre from which a nation is ruled, but a mere forcing house of dirty intrigue. Loyalty to tyrants and degenerates is a virtue; loyalty to a country or a cause is a thing that either the playwrights have never heard of, or which they know will bore the audience. The vice in which they luxuriate is the more disgusting from being the refined beastliness of a court, and not the mere coarseness of animal spirits. And their virtue, such as it is, is often more disgusting than their vice.

Such plays reveal, only too faithfully, to what an extent those who governed the nation were losing touch with reality, and the fall of the Tudor ideal is only too plainly prefigured in the decadence of the drama with which it was linked. The censorship, then as ever the bane of truth, was at work to see that the actors spoke smooth things, and the principle was adopted, then as now, that a play was an official act, and that anything offensive to foreign nations was to be suppressed by force of law. When the country was seething with anti-Catholic sentiment at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, a play of Middleton's was actually suppressed because it voiced the popular feeling against Spain. Nobody, except the people themselves, had any objection to a play which voiced the feeling of the courtiers against the people.

The drama did not decline without an effort to retrieve its honour. Both Middleton and the unfortunate, struggling Massinger at least made an attempt to maintain its position as a mirror of truth, and not merely the idle amusement of an evening. Massinger, whom Coleridge ingeniously characterizes as a decided Whig, does his best to make the drama a means of satirizing the vices of the time, and he is not above aiming a covert shaft at Royalty. But unless the dramatist has the spirit of the time to fill out his sails, his ship rots becalmed, and so it befell with Massinger. His morals are no vital part of the plays, they are tacked on more or less obviously to the

same tale of vice and triviality that had been told, to weariness, by Fletcher, with whom Massinger had sometimes collaborated. The very virtues are of a rather formal and copybook order; of an enlightened patriotism, like Shakespeare's, Massinger is almost innocent.

The decline of the drama reaches a further stage in the works of Ford, sweet and musical though these be. Ford almost drops the pretence of caring about right and wrong, and writes with all the sympathy of a decadent about such unlawful love as that of a brother and a sister. In his Perkin Warbeck he does indeed make a brave effort to revive the English historical play, but his spirit is that of Bacon, who helped him to his conception of the business King, Henry VII, and the moral of it all is that states thrive best when purged of corrupted blood. It is, in fact, not a history in the sense of being a criticism of national life, but a mere dynastic romance. The stage was rapidly ceasing to express anything but the corruption of a dead ideal; tragedy had lost its seriousness and comedy its *joie de vivre*, and except for its cutting short the career of Shirley, it may fairly be questioned whether the suppression of the drama under Puritan auspices was not a blessing in disguise.

Poetry was losing more and more of the joyous freshness of the Elizabethan songtide. Those who tried to carry on the tradition endeavoured to make up for the lack of inspiration by far-fetched intellectual "conceits", as they were called. John Donne, the future Dean of St. Paul's, in his very undiaconal youth as Jack Donne, was able to luxuriate in these fancies with a sufficiency of native genius to turn them into glorious poetry, though frequently the result was merely grotesque. Elizabethan poetry died hard, and enjoyed a St. Martin's summer in Herrick. Above all, it persisted with sufficient tenacity to allow the old spirit to be married to the new one of Puritan earnestness in the early work of Milton. But though slower than the decline of the drama, the tendency is for the spontaneous glow of the secular lyric to be sickled over with the pale cast of uninspired thought, a process which, despite its arrest by the fact that Puritanism could avail itself of the lyre but not of the stage, culminated in the mere artificiality of the Restoration. The most inspired poetry was flowing into religious channels, for religion was coming to be the most serious concern of the time.

This cult of an unbridled fancy was even more prevalent in prose than in poetry. Men would display an industry and a miscellaneous knowledge almost passing belief; of Archbishop Williams, one of

these prodigies, his biographer says that all his life he never required more than three hours nightly sleep, " it was ordinary with him to begin his studies at six of the clock and continue them till three in the morning, and be ready again by seven to walk in the circle of his indefatigable labours ". One wonders how such a man as Burton could have found time in the course of an ordinary life to dip into all the authors he quotes with such inexhaustible fecundity in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*. And yet one's wonder is hardly less at the sheer waste of so much of this learning by lack of intellectual discipline. Burton's treatise must remain forever quaint and delightful, in sufficiently small instalments, by reason of its very diffuseness, and it is hard to wish of Sir Thomas Browne that he were in any way different from his leisurely and lovable self, but one cannot help regretting that he was not able to turn his erudition to more profitable themes than that of " The Quincunciall Lozenge or network plantations of the ancients, artificially, naturally, mystically considered ", or to the leisurely discussion of such profound questions as whether or not Jews stink.

The prose of such masters as Burton, Browne, Jeremy Taylor and even Milton is gorgeous, in its inspired passages, beyond anything else in our literature, but the lack of discipline which was the fault of Elizabeth's time rendered it diffuse and wasteful of its resources to a lamentable degree. Thought, emancipated from the discipline of the schoolmen, wanted pulling together; it lacked pruning and direction; it had need of that austere discipline which the Puritan spirit, with all its faults, was able to supply. And the fruits of that discipline were first fully apparent when John Bunyan dreamed a dream in Bedford Prison, and told it, in plain English, to the world.

There were, however, signs of a new order of things moulded by a sterner discipline than the Elizabethan. This is particularly manifest in architecture, which now comes to be dominated by the genius of Inigo Jones, the first of our architect designers whose names have become household words. Jones was a consummate craftsman—perhaps the most attractive of all the works attributed to him is the lovely bridge that springs so lightly across the Conway at Llanrwst—but he was something more than a craftsman, for he had served a Venetian apprenticeship, and had so far imbibed the theories of Palladio, that stately but frigid revivalist of the old Roman style, that he annotated an English edition of that master's statement of principles.

By Inigo Jones the free spirit of Elizabethan architecture was

put into the bonds of law. Buildings were thought out in a way they never had been in Elizabethan times, when they had sprung up with something of the untamed exuberance of hedgerows in June. We do not ask who were the architects of those lavishly ornamented brick and timber structures. At Cobham Hall, in Kent, you talk of the Elizabethan wings, but of the Inigo Jones front, and when Charles I walked out to his death, it was beneath the frigid regard of the Banqueting Hall that his master architect had put up for him by strict Palladian rule, and after the model of the Grimani and Vendramin Calergi Palaces on the Grand Canal.

6

The Beauty of Holiness

By Elizabeth the Church of Rome, from which that of England had broken loose, was visualized as a temporal power threatening the independence of her kingdom, and the Church of England was, in consequence, primarily a department of the State. Discipline and not saintliness nor truth of dogma, was her aim. But when the whole of Europe was seething with spiritual enthusiasm at murderous pitch, it was impossible that England should rest content with a merely secular ideal. Some attempt had to be made to provide a spiritual substitute for what Rome had been, and the question at issue was whether this task could be accomplished by the Church that the civil power had set up, and over which the Sovereigns of England ruled with the authority of Popes.

Right up to the appointment by Charles I of Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury, the position of the Church is one extremely hard to define in matters of doctrine and ceremonial, for the sufficient reason that Churchmen were imperfectly agreed among themselves even as to the nature of the points at issue. To such a man as Elizabeth's last Archbishop, Whitgift, there was no inconsistency between the extreme doctrinal tenets of Calvinism and the most uncompromising assertion of episcopal claims. "Members of this family," remarked Lord Monmouth to Coningsby, "may think as they like, but they must act as I please," and this fairly accurately sums up the Elizabethan idea of Church discipline. But it is impossible to prevent dogma from reinforcing discipline. Any body of men placed, as the bishops were, in a position of temporal and spiritual authority, naturally tends to make the most of it, and, Calvin or no Calvin, to retain such useful beliefs of their predecessors as that of the magic

potency conferred by the laying on of hands at their ordination. It is probable that this, in the long run, will be followed by some attempt to recover the prestige conferred by the priestly miracle of the Sacrament. For a priesthood is a vested interest that naturally tends to its own augmentation.

With the accession of James, the religious nature of the Church rises into greater prominence. The King himself had come to England with a truly Scottish turn for theological disputation; he was much in earnest about points of doctrine and his own divine and intellectual power to fix them. This was unfortunate, because at the beginning of his reign he had to face a crisis that a cool and tactful man of the world might have handled so as to have avoided the bitterness and bloodshed of coming years. The dispute between the official heads of the Church and its *intransigeant* left wing had come to a head; a monster petition was presented by the Puritans, and James promptly summoned a conference to meet at Hampton Court, a wise and statesmanlike move if he had been bent on a comprehensive settlement, for few, as yet, of the Puritans wanted to secede from the Church altogether.

No doubt the King came to this conference with a genuine desire to see fair play in his capacity of moderator, and indeed, on more than one occasion, he raised his voice on the Puritan side. But he could not long keep out of the arena, nor could he get his experience of the Kirk out of his head, and the mere thought of it was enough to make him lose his temper—"If you aim at a Scottish presbytery," he blustered, "it agreeth as well with monarchy as God with the devil. Then Jack, and Tom, and Will, and Dick shall meet and censure me and my Council." He harped monotonously on his formula of "No bishop, no king", and finally throwing temper and discretion to the winds, burst out with, "If this be all your party hath to say, I will make them conform themselves, or else I will harry them out of the land, or else do worse."

This Hampton Court conference had at least the advantage of stimulating the Church to greater activity, for it was henceforth apparent that she would no longer be a comprehensive fold including all good Protestants, but that she now formed a party midway between the Catholics and the extreme Calvinists. Old Whitgift was sinking into the grave, and the real leadership of the Church was in the hands of Bancroft, his right-hand man and eventual successor. Bancroft, as Bishop of London, had displayed a furious intolerance at the Conference that had shocked even James, and had

gone so far as to protest against his opponents being heard against their Bishops. In the year after the Armada he had preached a sermon at Paul's Cross that had defined, with uncompromising directness, the divine prerogative of Bishops. He may fairly be entitled the first of our great High Churchmen, and Clarendon thought that if he had lived he would have altogether quenched, in England, the fire kindled at Geneva.

After the triumph of his views at the Conference, Bancroft's first care was to set the Church in order and to close up her ranks. Hundreds of non-conforming clergy were deprived of their livings, and though Bancroft could be personally generous to individual opponents, his zeal for what he imagined to be the Church's interests made him ruthless in enforcing conformity. But for those who remained he was diligent both in bettering their condition and in raising their standard of learning, a thing much neglected in the reign of Elizabeth. He is credited with a scheme, which never matured, of establishing a school of controversial divinity. It was under his auspices that the noblest work of any accomplished by the Anglican Church was brought to a successful conclusion, the translation of the Hebrew and Christian classics that goes under the name of the Authorized Version of the Bible. The Prayer book was at the same time rounded off by the addition to the Catechism of the part dealing with the Sacraments. A series of ecclesiastical canons were also promulgated in which the Church's attitude was at once defined and made more severe; to attack or secede from her was an offence punishable by excommunication, and the thin end of the ritualistic wedge was introduced by the careful defence and injunction of the sign of the Cross in Baptism.

Bancroft died before he had time to complete his work, and his successor was a Calvinist martinet of the narrowest school, George Abbot, son of a humble clothworker, and whose parents had undergone and survived the rigours of Marian persecution. He combined the bitter and self-assertive disposition that is sometimes found in self-made men, with a furious hatred of Rome and all her works. Though a martinet in discipline, he was an extreme Calvinist in doctrine, and the effect of his primacy was to check the process which Bancroft had started, of making the Church of England a *via media* between the extremes of Rome and Geneva.

But a movement of thought had started in Holland, a country with which England was at this time in close spiritual touch, calculated to supply the Church with the very doctrinal basis she

most needed. One of the most amiable characters in this time of bitter and brutal religious controversy was a professor at Leyden University called Arminius, who died in 1609. He appears to have had a singularly tolerant disposition, and was even able to pay an appreciative visit to Rome. The tenets of fighting Calvinism, that God had damned the majority of his creatures before he made them and that no effort on their part was of the least avail for their deliverance from so horrible a fate, struck him as too extreme, and he put forward a view more complimentary to the divine nature. He asserted that Christ had died for all, and not only for the predestined elect, and that it rested with each man whether he were to receive or reject so great a salvation.

This modification of Calvinism was anathema to the stern enthusiasts to whom predestination was not a theory but a weapon. In times of severe conflict it is always the moderate who goes to the wall. Arminianism came to be identified with the burghal and provincial party in the Low Countries, and only a few years after its founder's death that hard-bitten soldier, Prince Maurice of Nassau, representing the extreme Calvinists, turned suddenly on their rivals, judicially murdered their leader, Oldenbarnveldt, and condemned to life-long imprisonment the enlightened Grotius, founder of the modern Law of Nations. A packed synod was held at Dort, to which English representatives were invited, not to examine the truth of the matter but to condemn the Arminians, and assert once and for all the doctrine of divine unreason and human impotence.

Arminianism, however badly it may have thriven in the country of its origin, fell on fruitful soil within the Church of England. It was well adapted for men who did not want to go the whole way with the Calvinists and yet had no desire to make terms with Rome. Logical extremes have seldom found permanent favour with Englishmen, and the Arminian solution was eminently suited to the national instinct for kindliness and compromise.

Unfortunately compromise was wholly alien from the Puritans. With them it was all or nothing, and an Arminian was about as bad, if not the same thing in disguise as a Papist. Thus it was that their hatred fastened with peculiar virulence upon Abbot's successor, Archbishop Laud, one of those men who, if predestination were indeed true, might seem foreordained to tragic issues. His was a type of mind more akin to the Latin than to the English, one of uncompromising directness and with a passion for uniformity. He, at least, had a clear vision of what the Church of England ought

to be, and he bent his whole energy to its realization. The term "bigot" which Macaulay, with the obtuse injustice he sometimes displayed towards men he could not understand, applied to Laud, is singularly inept, because in dogma he was, for his time, remarkably tolerant. His own belief was Arminian in so far as he desired to tone down the severity of Calvinism, but he was as firm and active in his opposition to Rome as the most zealous reformer among them all.

Had Laud been cast in a smaller mould, his failure might have been less dramatic. There is at least some element of truth in Newman's estimate of him as of stature akin to the elder days of the Church, perhaps even more than Newman realized, for, in truth, the Archbishop seems as one born into the wrong age. Transparently sincere and disinterested, he found himself committed to the leadership of what was, in fact, a forlorn hope. He wanted to transfer to the Church of England all the authority and prestige that had once invested the cosmopolitan power of Rome within our shores. Himself a man of learning and refinement, the crudity and uncouthness of Puritanism in its more grotesque forms jarred on him painfully. The phrase that was constantly on his lips and in his heart was "the beauty of holiness"; the worship of God was, in his eyes, worthy of all the reverence and loveliness that man could bestow. And this noble enthusiasm was mingled with a positively old-maidish love of order and symmetry. Laud, we suspect, must have been one of those people who, in private life, cannot bear to see anything out of its place.

Herein lay his error, an error fatal in an Englishman. Uniformity was with him a necessity of existence, and he pursued it regardless of prudence or possibility. We can sympathize with him in his expressed indignation against those who come into God's house with no more reverence "than a tinker and his bitch come into an ale house"; he was doing his bare duty when he stopped the main aisle of St. Paul's from being used as a place of merchandize and conversation, nor was it so terrible a thing when he had the Communion Table decently railed off at the East end of the Church; but to force the English Liturgy upon the Scottish congregations was an act of stark insanity. The unpardonable offence of Laud, that which more than anything else brought him to his martyrdom, was that the Church of which he dreamed was no respecter of persons. Anglicanism has, as a rule, shown an admirable tact in discriminating between those who may or may not be considered fit subjects for

spiritual censure, but when the shafts of Laud's sarcastic wit flew at the highest in the land, and when the Church's disciplinary rod descended not only on the poor and ignorant, but on the backs of great lords whose fortunes had been founded on her plunder, the situation was plainly intolerable.

"He did court persons too little," says Clarendon, "and did not consider what men said or were like to say of him. If the faults and vices were fit to be looked into and discovered, let the persons be who they would that were guilty of them, they were sure to find no connivance or favour from him. He intended that the discipline of the Church should be felt, as well as spoken of, and that it should be applied to the greatest and most splendid transgressors, as well as to the punishment of smaller offences and meaner offenders; and thereupon called for or cherished the discovery of those who were not careful to cover their own iniquities, thinking they were above the reach of other men's, or their power or will to chastise. Persons of honour and great quality of the court and of the country were every day cited into the High-Commission Court, upon the fame of their incontinence, or other scandal in their lives, and were there prosecuted to their shame and punishment: and as the shame (which they called an insolent triumph upon their degree and quality, and levelling them with the common people) was never forgotten but watched for revenge; so the fines imposed were the more questioned and repined against, because they were assigned to the rebuilding and repairing of St. Paul's church, and thought therefore, to be the more severely imposed, and the less compassionately reduced and excused; which likewise made the jurisdiction and rigour of the Star-chamber more felt and murmured against, and sharpened many men's humours against the Bishops, before they had any ill-intention towards the Church."

This passage throws upon the growth of popular feeling against the Church and Laud, a light which the once fashionable school of Whig historians consistently shut out, and it is the easier to misunderstand what the Church stood for then, because after the fall of Laud she never reverted to his ideals. There is no doubt that he hoped to see her an independent and even democratic power in the sense that she was so high and holy as to be above making distinctions between the sheep of Christ's flock, who in His eyes and that of His Bride were equal one with another. That had been the ideal also of Hildebrand and Becket, of the Papacy at its best. Laud was an unflinching opponent of corruption in high places,

and even dared to remonstrate with his sovereign, when Charles had condescended to land-grabbing in Richmond Park.

Laud's attempt to realize his ideal ended in failure, to be followed, after the Restoration, by what was worse than failure, the kind of success that is purchased at the price of a Church's soul. For this, no doubt, he must bear his share of the blame; he was a tactless, impatient man, a bundle of nerves, with too little sense of what could or could not be done. His zeal made him overstep the bounds not only of discretion, but even, at times, of humanity, though the sentences that he was instrumental in passing on the authors of what, judged by the standards of any time, were scurrilous libels, were, judged by the standards of his own, not severe, and of how much sympathy the most notable of his victims, Prynne, was deserving, is shewn by the fiendish revenge that he took upon Laud, then a friendless old man in the hands of his enemies. But when all is said, and however much we may disagree with Laud's aims and methods, every generous man must admit that he stood nobly for a noble cause, and that where he failed it is doubtful whether any man could have succeeded. When Henry VIII knocked the keystone out of the arch, he made it impossible for the Church to carry such a weight of authority as Laud would have had it support.

Nevertheless the first half of the seventeenth century was the golden age of the Church of England. The mere formalism engendered by the Elizabethan compromise rapidly wore off when men had more time to think about their spiritual than their temporal salvation. The Church may have chosen a middle way, but that way was spacious and sweet to tread. The distinctively Anglican spirit may have lacked the burning singleness of purpose, the "all or nothing" determination that was the strength of the Puritans, but it had a graciousness and charm that are best comprehended in Laud's scripturally borrowed phrase, "the beauty of holiness." This beauty never was more tenderly set forth than in the life and writings of George Herbert, who contrived to be, in the best sense of both words, a gentleman and a minister of God. His writings display none of the stormy ardours of Gothic Christianity, nor the white hot zeal of Calvinism; his very metre is quiet; his model parson is no hot gospeller, but a courteous and affectionate father to his flock, guiding his life by that charity which suffereth long and is kind. Even his rebukes will be couched in some such form as—"this was not so well said as it might have been forborne", or "Your meaning is not thus but thus". Herbert perfectly expresses the ideal of the Church of

England, as her most enlightened sons dreamed, in one of his poems:

> "Beauty in thee takes up her place,
> And dates her letters from thy face,
> When she doth write.
>
> A fine aspect in fit array,
> Neither too mean nor yet too gay,
> Shows who is best.
>
> Outlandish looks may not compare:
> For all they either painted are,
> Or else undrest."

To be painted, in Herbert's view, is the error of Rome, to run to the opposite extreme and go about naked that of Non-conformity.

The attempt of Laud and his fellow-churchmen to realize the beauty of holiness found expression in more ways than in literature. It is, certainly, not an age of great church-building, though what there is is exceedingly interesting and significant. The attempt to restore the Church to something of its dignity and influence of pre-Reformation days is reflected in a last appearance of the old Gothic style, blended more or less harmoniously with the Palladian classicism of which Inigo Jones is the supreme exponent. There is the curious Church of St. Catherine Cree in the City, with its East Window in obvious imitation of old St. Paul's, and its classical arcade, a Church at whose rededication Laud went to lengths of pious ceremonial that gave dire offence. There is also that strange architectural freak of St. John's, Leeds, which Mr. Blomfield cites as showing that "the Gothic tradition was preserved in masonry long after it had died out in the other building trades," [1] a fact, by the way, of which any seventeenth century cottage is an equally convincing proof.

But it is not in building that the Laudian revival finds its chief expression. After all, the plunderers of the Reformation had at least left the parish churches standing, however bare they had stripped them. This wastage of furniture and ornament the Church now made a brave effort to replace. Even after the renewed pillage of God's house by His saints, sufficient evidence has been left to us in the shape of richly carved pulpits, Communion Tables, lecterns, organs and pews to show the visitor to our parish churches on what a generous scale the Church's sons must have followed their Archbishop's lead in contributing to her reedification. Even in sculpture the old Christian spirit is not quite extinct. The peace that passeth all understanding was never more serenely depicted than on the

[1] *A Short History of Renaissance Architecture in England*, p. 100.

upturned, marble countenance of Sir William Clarke in the parish church of Hitcham, not far from Maidenhead.

What the Church lacked in zeal she made up for in love. There was never a time when so many of her sons were imbued with the spirit of sweetness that most endears the Founder of their faith. Such is the inspiration of those biographies of Walton which, if not the most perspicacious, are perhaps the most delightful in our language. Walton, looking back after the Restoration upon this period of the Church's history, not only succeeds in conveying the impression that he loves his subject, but actually that he loves his reader; his nature is to take the whole of mankind into his affection and confidence. "Reader," he says, in a typical passage, as he draws near to the close of his life of Donne, "this sickness continued long, not only weakening, wearying him so much that my desire is that he may now take some rest; and that before I speak of his death, thou wilt not think it an impertinent digression to look back with me upon some observations of his life, which, whilst a gentle slumber gives rest to his spirits, may, I hope, not unfitly exercise thy consideration." This loving courtesy—and it is but one of many instances that could be cited—is the more remarkable at a time when, in a bitter and prolonged war, the Devil was being let loose in the name of God all over Europe. And the spirit that now inspired the Church only gradually died out as the generation reared in the pre-revolutionary ideal passed away.

In this, as in all history, we must guard against too sweeping generalization. The Church has much to answer for in the way of intolerance, short-sightedness, even tyranny, and we must not forget the cries of rage and horror around the pillory of Prynne, Bastwick and Burton, nor the gagging of free discussion, nor the thousands of emigrants who braved the perils of an Atlantic voyage and an unknown land rather than live under the Bishops. Perhaps it is a good thing that Laud did not succeed; it is arguable that the rule of squires was a lesser evil when unchecked by the domination of a priesthood. But that failure involved the failure of the Church to stand for any intelligible religious principle; it was her fate to sink gradually to her comparatively undistinguished respectability of the eighteenth century, from which the beauty of holiness had long departed.

On the intellectual aspect of the Church's life, and the growth within her fold of a spirit of free inquiry and toleration, we have yet to dwell.

7

The Constitutional Impasse

We shall make no attempt to follow in detail the course of the great constitutional struggle that could be decided in no other way than by civil war and regicide. We have tried to show what influences were working to bring about the downfall of the Tudor system of government, whose whole success had depended upon a conjunction of circumstances that could by no means be regarded as permanent: the paramount necessity for a strong central government, the impotence of the nobility, the subordination of religious fervour to political necessity, and, most important of all, the inability of the government to carry on its essential functions without making itself dependent on Parliament for constant supplies. Nobody realized better than the shrewd and cool-headed sovereigns of the Tudor line how far they were from emulating the despotism of a Caesar, or even of a Most Christian King. When Henry VIII broke the connection with Rome but dared not lay hands on the Common Law nor form a standing army, he tacitly resigned himself to the position of a constitutional monarch, one who governs the kingdom on conditions. The Tudors understood these conditions but the Stuarts did not, and therefore failed to play the constitutional game.

And yet the Scottish House found itself face to face with a problem that might have taxed the utmost ingenuity of its predecessors. Its Kings found all their resources steadily shrinking on account of the universal rise in prices that followed the discovery of the New World. They were in the position of a man of fixed income, who in 1914 was just able to make both ends meet, and after the war finds his position desperate. The one bright feature was supplied by the customs revenues, which, as trade steadily increased, tended to go up with it, and it was to these that the Crown clung most desperately, as to the last resource between it and ruin. But it was obvious that the only way in which the King could avoid being at the mercy of his Parliaments would be by the strictest economy. In peace, he might just manage to hold his own, but let the country become involved in war or any policy involving extraordinary expense, and there was no way out of it but for the King to scrap the Constitution and provide for himself, or else for him to accept whatever Parliament chose to dole out to him on whatever conditions it liked to impose.

The Tudor system, however well it may have worked for a time, involved a division of sovereignty that could by no means be permanent. The King was supposed to be responsible for carrying on, within the limits of the laws, the business of government, but this task might be rendered impossible should Parliament choose to deny him the bare means of so doing. It might even, and once did, call for an expensive policy and then leave the Sovereign in the lurch. So far there had been no question of denying the King's right to appoint his own staff of ministers and officials, but Parliament reserved the right to object to anything they did and even to knock them down like ninepins by the method of impeachment. Government was becoming a business demanding high technical ability, and it is not easy to see how any business could be carried on successfully under such a handicap. The one chance was for a Sovereign to combine such extraordinary tact and ability as to be able to convince Parliament that his policy was also theirs, and that if they would unloose their constituents' purse strings there was some reasonable chance of getting it efficiently executed on the lowest terms. This had, indeed, been more or less the case in the great days of Elizabeth.

Stated thus, it would seem that the Sovereign had an almost irresistible case against niggardly or encroaching Parliaments. To expect a King to manage a Kingdom without the means of doing so is to drive the poor man to desperate expedients, and for Parliament to use a constitutional power as a means of levying blackmail is to invite unconstitutional reprisals. But if the Sovereign's position was impossible, not less so was that of Parliament. To revert to our simile of the manager, it is pretty evident that any business would sooner or later be ruined if entrusted to an hereditary and irremovable chief who might be incompetent, corrupt or indolent to an indefinite degree, and appoint a staff to match. It might be said that this system had succeeded well enough in the Middle Ages, but then the sovereign, unless he had all his wits about him, was soon or later put out of the way. With the advance of civilization and the growth of order, the remedies of regicide and deposition became harder to apply, though time was to prove that both were capable of revival. But it had become more difficult to lay sacrilegious hands on a King now that, thanks to the Reformation, he had become something of a Pope as well, and that the Church, instead of looking to a rival sovereign power, was united in her allegiance to his Divine Right. So that what had, in fact,

been one of its most important checks was removed from the Constitution.

Granting, therefore, that there was no means of replacing an unsatisfactory monarch, what was Parliament to do with him? It could hardly be expected to bleed the country white in order to supply him with the means of ruining her, nor could it tamely allow him to overturn all the laws of the land in order to make provision for himself. Things must sooner or later come to an impasse that could only end in the complete surrender of one of the parties, or civil war. Either the King must take over the functions of Parliament and put enough money into his purse to make receipts balance expenses, or Parliament must take over the King's functions and itself appoint the staff of ministers by whom the nation was to be governed.

It is not irrelevant to ask, in this connection, what we are to understand by Parliament. The Whig school of historians are in the habit of talking about the struggle between the King and his people, whereas in one sense the King might have been said to be more representative of the whole of his subjects than Parliament, which after all only represented a minority of them. Selden's idea that non-voters of under forty shillings a year are somehow "involved" in the more fortunate voters, just as the women are "involved" in the men, must appear to the disfranchised as little more than a convenient sophistry. The greater part of the people, the country labourers who were descended from the old villeins, the townsmen who stood outside the circle of the ruling oligarchy, hardly dreamed of being represented, nor did Parliament dream of taking any special thought for their interests.

It can be said for Parliament that a more democratic assembly was then hardly possible. From time to time it did manage to stand unmistakably for what the nation was feeling. It faithfully reflected such popular prejudices as the hatred of Spain and the suspicion of Rome. It had the steady backing of the all-powerful London mob, that, being on the spot, stood to Crown and Parliament alike for the proletariat, and, in the absence of a standing army, was able to terrorize the Crown at the crisis of its fortunes. Just as the fear of Spain had held together Crown and people under Elizabeth, so did hostility to the Crown, and to a government in Church and State that had lost touch with the nation, hold the various classes of the people together under the first two Stuarts, and postpone the development of the subsequent great and successful attempt on the part of an

oligarchy to impose its rule on Crown and nation alike. And yet all this time oligarchy was quietly consolidating its power, and compassing the destruction of the only rivals that stood between it and its yet unformulated ambition.

The fatal tilt which Henry VIII had given to the social system by his victory over the Pope and the monks was now threatening to overturn the throne itself. Had he succeeded in keeping the plunder in his own hands, all might have been well for his successors, but in letting it stick to the hands of his instruments he had engineered disaster. The descendants of these men were now a rich and prosperous landed class, controlling the whole machinery of local government, and intolerant of any check upon their power. The Church was no longer a rival, and if she attempted to assert her authority, might become a victim. It was from this class that the Commons of the first two Stuarts were recruited, and it was this class that they represented. As if to point the moral of the tragedy, the ominous name of Cromwell came to be again on every man's tongue, but this time it was not some poor old abbot who had to be let blood, but the King himself.

That more democratic elements came into prominence during the turmoil of civil war was due to the fact that Parliament had loosed forces that it was unable to bind. But Parliament itself, from the accession of James I to Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump, was an assembly of wealthy and mostly well-born men, however sincerely they might hold to their faith and constitutional principles, and who though they might enter into temporary alliance with peasantry or mob, had a keen class consciousness and sense of their own interests. And it was not only over the Lower House that the Crown was losing control. The Upper House had long been changing its character from that of the old feudal council of tenants-in-chief to that of a house of magnates, holding their seats by hereditary privilege.

Even at the accession of the Tudors, the Upper Chamber did not contain a majority of hereditary members; the magnates, secular and regular, of the Church contributed to make it what Professor Pollard has happily termed a House of Experts rather than a mere House of Lords. But the showy and decadent feudalism of the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance led to a strict and formal cult of hereditary privilege. Heraldry became an exact and complicated science; it was a part of every gentleman's education to be skilled in chevrons and quarterings and differences. The

Duke or "leader" of Blankshire might never have been near the county in question, and might require to be led about by a keeper, but that would not in the least affect his position as Duke. The important thing for him was to get born in the correct way. This was a very different conception of nobility from that of the days when the Earl, or Folk's Elder, would rush down to the coast, as did Brihtnoth, to stem a Danish invasion, with his personal following and such shire levies as he could collect at short notice. The transition from one ideal to the other was very gradual, and we have seen how, in Henry VIII's reign, the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk were chosen to put down rebellion in their own Counties. It was in Richard III's reign that the College of Heralds was incorporated, and it was the policy of the Tudors to keep questions of precedence in their own hands and discourage the maintenance of heralds by baronial Houses.

The Tudors had had little trouble with their Upper Chamber and probably little idea how dangerous this strengthening of the hereditary principle might become. The Reformation had reduced the non-hereditary majority of Churchmen to the Bench of Bishops who, though a minority, could almost be regarded as an official vote in favour of the Crown. Elizabeth had kept her Lords easily in hand, creating sufficient new Peers to form a majority when added to the Bishops. However a Peer once made cannot be unmade, and he or his descendants will sooner or later drift into independence of the Crown, so Elizabeth's policy could only be carried on by perpetually doubling the dose of new peerages. Her successor, who was glad enough to provide for his own needs without too much regard for the future and to fill his gaping pockets by fair means or foul, not only created peers right and left, but invented the vile expedient, too faithfully copied by modern governments, of poisoning the Fount of Honour and putting up the Peerage to sale. His crime was visited upon his children, for when his son came to the throne, the Upper House had passed the limits of practicable control by new creation.

The part played in the downfall of Charles I by his peerage is somewhat obscured by the fact that the most prominent of his disloyal magnates ceased to play an important part in public affairs after the first year or two of civil war. This is not surprising when we remember that however much it might be in their interests to turn the King into a puppet, the very last thing that any of them wanted to do was to unchain the people. These nobles were mostly descended from those who had grown fat by the plunder of the

Church, and they were the spiritual and often the lineal ancestors of the great Whig Houses who did, for a time, succeed in imposing their yoke upon King and people alike. Some of them had more in common with the modern capitalist than the old, rough feudal Baron. The great and greedy House of Russell was still busily engaged in raking in money. Its representative under Charles I was, as might have been expected, an ardent Protestant, and among the most prominent figures of the opposition, One of his enterprises, out of which he stood to reap enormous profits but which he did not live to complete, was the draining of the Eastern Fen country, and his building operations in London brought him into trouble with the Star Chamber, a court much disliked by the rich. "A wise man," says Clarendon, "but of too great and plentiful a fortune to wish a subversion of the government; and it quickly appeared that he only intended to make himself and his friends great at court not at all to lessen the court itself." A typical Whig!

There were the two Parliamentary generals, the Earls of Essex and Manchester, the former of whom justified the killing of Strafford by the cynical plea "stone dead hath no fellow", and both of whom carried on the war against their Sovereign with an apathy that bordered on treason, even from a rebel's point of view. Then there were the two brothers, the Earls of Warwick and Holland, descended from the most hateful of all Henry VIII's tools, Richard Rich. Of Warwick we again give one of those inimitable sketches from Clarendon's portfolio: "A man of no grace in court, and looked upon as the greatest patron of the puritans, because of much the greatest estate of all who favoured them . . . though he was of a life very licentious and unconformable to their professed rigour, which they rather dispensed with than to withdraw from a house where they received so eminent a protection and such notable bounty." As for Holland, he piled treason on treason, deserting the King for the Parliament and the Parliament for the King twice over, getting well snubbed by both parties for his pains, and being finally brought to rest by the headsman. He "did think poverty the most insupportable evil that could befall any man in this world".

Of the older families there was the Howard Earl of Arundel, who had precedence, after the officers of State, of the rest of the Council, an aristocratic snob, who, though a distinguished patron of the arts, "was never suspected to love anybody, nor to have the least propensity to justice, charity or compassion," and who retired to Italy rather than be mixed up with anything so much beneath

his dignity as the contention of King and Parliament.[1] Finally there was the representative of the old marcher Earls of Northumberland, a man of immense dignity who scarcely considered himself inferior to the King, and having been loaded by the King with benefits, failed him both as Admiral and General, and finally followed the time-honoured Percy tradition of rebellion.

We have devoted what may at first sight seem a disproportionate amount of attention to these men, because, though they early drop out of the struggle into temporary insignificance, it was the party for which they stood that eventually reaped the fruits of it all. Ostensibly the contest was between the Crown and the Puritans, but the Puritans toppled from the height of victory to the depths of persecution, and though a new King might enjoy his own again for awhile, it was only that the crown itself might become the plaything of an all-powerful oligarchy.

8

The Crown Loses Prestige

One evil result of the division of sovereignty between Crown and Parliament was that while the control of policy was vested in the King, Parliament, to use Professor Pollard's singularly happy phrase, played the part of a perpetual opposition. This, as might have been expected, led to both indifference and ignorance with regard to national policy on the part of an assembly whose main idea was to develop its own privileges and keep down the income of the Crown to a bare minimum. When it did take up a policy, its judgment was swayed by its emotions or prejudices.

Now James I and the ablest of his advisers, Salisbury and Bacon, regarded the art of government from what we may best call a professional standpoint. It was, in their view, the business of experts in kingcraft. This was sound enough in so far as it demanded experience and study, but the expert in human affairs is apt to blunder as woefully as the man of mere feeling, though in a different way. Nations are after all generally swayed by their feelings, and the man who suppresses his own is apt to leave those of others out of his reckoning. It was to their incapacity to appreciate spiritual forces that, more than anything else, was the ruin of the Stuarts.

[1] He did, however, assist the King's cause to an estimated extent of £34,000.

James I had some claim to be regarded as above the average in his craft. He was for anticipating by a century the union of English and Scottish Parliaments, thereby running counter to the as yet invincible nationalist prejudices of both nations, as well as the covetousness of merchants who feared Scottish competition. He saw that it might pay more to be friends than enemies with the now declining power of Spain; his Parliament, like the mass of his subjects, could not get beyond the Elizabethan point of view, from which Spain was the arch-enemy and supreme danger, besides offering opportunities for unlimited loot. The Spanish Ambassador, Gondomar, a hidalgo of the finest type, by sheer ascendancy of character soon had the King under his thumb, and this fact was thoroughly appreciated by the nation, whose indignation rose to boiling point when it became known that Gondomar's influence had determined the fate of the Elizabethan hero, Raleigh. Satire and abuse were showered on the imperturbable ambassador; the ghosts of Essex and Raleigh were conjured up from Elysium to denounce him; Middleton's banned play represented the Spaniards as the black pieces at a game of chess, Sir Edward Coke denounced them in Parliament as the origin of all evil from the sheep-rot to the pox. James filled up the cup of his unpopularity by trying to arrange a Spanish marriage for his son, a scheme which was not even good kingcraft, as he was thoroughly fooled for his pains, and reaped nothing except unpopularity from the courtship.

The power chiefly to be reckoned with was, in fact, not Spain but Holland. She was as much on the rise as Spain was on the decline, and the higher she rose, the more did her interests clash with those of England. The Dutch were frankly out for business, they thought it no indignity to kow-tow to mandarins, no treason to trade with Spain when they were fighting her. In the East Indies they were aiming at a monopoly similar to that of Spain in the West, and they asserted their privileges by a massacre of English traders at Ambonya, an outrage for which our government could never get proper compensation. In the North Sea they were in perpetual conflict with our claim to take a toll of the herring fisheries in what we called "British waters". Their great international jurist, Grotius, published a historic treatise in which he advocated the doctrine of the seas being free to all nations, and in the reign of Charles I the ablest of our legal historians, Selden, put our case for closing all seas which were inside of an imaginary line passing from any one point to any other point of the English coast. The

Dutch were so strong on the sea—an admiral of theirs even captured the Plate fleet—that it was hopeless to think of asserting our claims until we could back them with an adequate navy. The ministers believed in keeping the peace with Spain and strengthening the navy to the point of effective persuasion.

But the nation did not regard the question from this eminently practical standpoint. To them Holland was something more than a piece in the diplomatic game. Englishmen and Dutchmen had fought side by side and the Dutch were regarded as the arch champions of the Protestant faith against the power of Antichrist, now gathering its forces for a supreme effort to undo the work of Wittenburg and Geneva. The Low Countries were usurping that influence that France had hitherto exercised over the faith and intellect of the nation. Those communities of the elect, whose zeal was too extreme for the official governors of the Church, could find a home among their more uncompromising brethren at the Hague or Amsterdam. Dutch scholarship was now unsurpassed; the University of Leyden, founded to commemorate deliverance from Spanish tyranny, might almost claim to be the intellectual centre of Europe. Not only did the Protestant left wing take comfort from the Synod of Dort, and inspiration from the Calvinist divines of Holland, but the Laudian party, when it arose, was largely influenced by Arminius. Even in art Dutch as well as Flemish influence was, as we shall presently see, giving birth to a new ideal in England.

Thus while our sovereigns played the correct diplomatic moves and the Dutchmen plodded on with a steady eye to the main chance, Parliament and popular opinion in England only thought of advancing the cause of the true religion in alliance with Holland against our old enemy Spain. There is a remarkable rhymed pamphlet written in 1622 called *The Interpreter*, which contrasts three types of men, the Catholic who is of course an unmitigated scoundrel and potential regicide; the honest, uncompromising Puritan who would "a subject be, no slave"; and the "indifferent man" who calls himself a Protestant, who makes a God of the King, who deserves a pension from Spain, and who is so atrociously mean that he will quarrel with the Dutch on such absurd points as those of honour, because they happened to beat our ships away from the Indies and Greenland, and of profit, because they presume to be our "herring-tasters" in the North Sea. It is evidently enough, in the pamphleteer's view, to brand the wretched Protestant with such opinions to convict him of the direst villainy.

James managed, by keeping the peace, to carry on his government with constant friction and difficulty, but without serious mishap, until the religious issue forced him, very unwillingly, to give his Parliament a winning advantage by allowing himself to take sides in a European war. The supreme thirty years' struggle between Rome and her revolted provinces began with the acceptance of the Bohemian crown by the Calvinist Elector Palatine. It was a clever idea to seize as a Protestant outpost the fatherland of Huss and Ziska, but the task was one beyond the Elector's strength. The Imperial army chased him in hopeless confusion from Prague and Spanish forces from the Netherlands made short work of his Electorate on the Rhine. Now not only was the Palsgrave, as he was called, the Protestant champion, but James's son-in-law. Parliament made it a point of honour that he should not be left to his fate against the Austrian-Spanish dynastic combination. They had some childish notion in their minds that the progress of the Catholic armies in Germany could be arrested by a diversion against Spanish commerce.

James was at least shrewd enough to know that, however glibly Parliament might talk about subsidies, his resources could not stand the strain of a considerable war. He clung desperately to the scheme of restoring his son-in-law by acquiring the Infanta as a daughter-in-law. He got rid of a by no means disloyal Parliament when they pressed their anti-Spanish views to the extent of annoying Gondomar. He at last allowed his son, the ill-fated Charles I, to go on a wild goose chase after the Infanta with the Duke of Buckingham to Madrid. This Duke of Buckingham was the man who more than anybody else sealed the doom of effective monarchy in England. Poor James was one of those unfortunate men who, owing to some mental kink acquired in infancy, are drawn by an attraction that need not be more than sentimental to persons of their own sex. Buckingham's face had proved his fortune, and he had had to compete for his master's slobbering affections with a candidate of the Howards, whose face had been carefully doctored for the purpose. The influence that he acquired over James and his son proves him to have possessed some considerable attractiveness and force of will, but there is nothing in history more nauseating than the grovelling adulation he received from Bacon.

Buckingham had all the appearance of a splendid and generous young hero, he had all the reality of a mischievous fool. Whatever he put his hand to failed, for intellectually and morally he was sparkle without depth. When he came back with the young Charles

from Madrid, the London crowd, delighted at their escape, greeted them with tumultuous demonstrations of joy. James was now powerless, his son was the hero of the hour, and both were the puppets of Buckingham. Buckingham, delighted at being the darling of the nation, joyously rushed, where James and the Tudors had feared to tread, into the paths of a dashing foreign policy. A Parliament was summoned, war resolved on, and an inadequate sum voted with much enthusiasm. An untrained and undisciplined mob, calling itself an army, had already been sent to Holland, which did not want it, to place itself under the orders of a blackguard German freebooter called Mansfeld, and perished miserably for lack of supplies. Then James died, having practically ceased to reign. How bitter was the feeling he had aroused against him can best be studied in a terrific invective published, three years before his death, by someone calling himself Tom Tell-Troath. Here the last rags of respect for royalty are stripped off. Tom was a jingo who was patriotically scandalized by the King's pacifism and subservience to Gondomar, and did not hesitate to inform him, in the roundest terms, what his subjects were saying about him. Such language nobody, except an open traitor, would have dreamed of using about Elizabeth, but Tom is a patriot and voicing an increasingly articulate public opinion. The days of the Tudor system were drawing to their tragic close.

9

"THOROUGH"

When Buckingham's first puppet achieved the solace, unprecedented in a Sovereign of his House, of a peaceful death, and another puppet sat in his place, the position of royalty was already desperate, but it was soon to be rendered almost hopeless. Untaught by the lessons of one abortive Catholic marriage, the Duke's next move in the dashing foreign policy was to rush through a match between Charles and a French princess, Henrietta Maria, before Parliament could meet, a piece of sharp practice that destroyed the last hope of trustful co-operation between the two powers that divided British sovereignty. It soon became evident that Parliament both would and could make the King's position impossible as a Constitutional sovereign. They refused to finance the war to which they themselves had committed him, and they struck at his last resource by denying his time-honoured right to levy customs duties.

The unhappy King was thus from the outset placed in the position

of being expected to run the nation's business, of being denied the means of doing so, and being accounted a tyrant if he attempted to provide for himself. In this case of Parliament versus Crown, a skilful enough counsel could put an almost overwhelming case for either side. If Charles was in an impossible position, so equally was his Parliament. It might be the theory of the constitution that the King should govern and Parliament foot the bill, but it was too much to ask an assembly of English gentlemen that they should provide the egregious Buckingham with the means of driving the nation to ruin. The weakness of effective Kingship is that it supposes a competent King, and Charles was one of those men who bring a revolution in their train almost as surely as night follows day. Modern times have seen three conspicuous instances of Kings being done to death by their people, and in every instance the King has been one of the same and an exceedingly worthy type. Wasters like Louis Quinze, worldings like the Merry Monarch, tyrants like the Iron Tsar, die quietly in their beds, it is the fish-blooded, unimaginative, conscientious sovereigns, Charles I, Louis XVI, Nicholas II, who get done to death by subjects who have not even their vices with which to sympathize.

Of these three ill-fated and strangely similar men, Charles I is, in his life and his death, the most estimable. A more well-meaning man has never sat on the throne of England. But from his birth, fate had spun her toils around him. He was a sickly boy with a weakness in his limbs that was probably rickets, and a defect of speech which he never quite lost. This had the effect of giving him an extreme shyness and reserve, which in after years developed into an icy and defensive dignity. It also conferred on him a pathetic readiness to surrender utterly to the affection and influence of some one person possessed of those qualities of exuberance and self-confidence which he so painfully lacked. Such a man was Buckingham, and, after his death, such a woman was Henrietta Maria, the two most fatal counsellors any King could have chosen. He clung to Buckingham with a dog-like devotion that the nation could see and resented, and when Buckingham was murdered the iron entered into his soul, and he would give his trust to no other man, not to Strafford nor Laud nor Rupert. James had suffered from too little dignity, but Charles suffered, more fatally, from too much. "Take not this as a threatening," he said to his third Parliament after intimating the delicate truth that if they positively refused him supplies he would have to provide them for himself,

" for I scorn to threaten any but my equals." Men who use such language are asking for trouble.

Four strenuous years saw the utter breakdown of co-operation between King and Parliament. Buckingham urged the King from bad to worse in the spirit of a gambler who tries to recoup his losses by constantly doubling the stakes. Having sacrificed to a French alliance the support of Parliament, he threw this overboard and added war with France to war with Spain. Against both Powers he failed ignominously; an attempt of Buckingham himself to relieve the Huguenot stronghold, La Rochelle, ended in disaster; Parliament would not concede to the King the means of paying, disciplining, or housing his troops. Driven desperate, the King resorted to illegal ways of providing for his needs. The whole wrath of Parliament was now concentrated upon Buckingham and the King dissolved it for a second time in order to save his beloved favourite. Then a third Parliament met, and the King tried to come to a settlement with them by agreeing to the fresh statement of Constitutional or Common Law principles known as the Petition of Right. But the Commons were just as capable of sharp practice as the King, for no sooner did the Petition become law than they twisted it into including the denial of the right to Customs Duties, which would have left the King worse off than before. The attack on Buckingham was taken up with renewed vigour, and the wretched man was murdered, as a direct result, when at Portsmouth on his way to head another military and naval folly at La Rochelle.

The breaking point had been reached, and it became evident to Charles that his only chance was to govern as best he could without Parliamentary help. The Houses were fiercely intolerant, and one of their chief grievances against the King was his unwillingness to persecute Catholics and even Arminians. Charles was no lawless despot; it was his intention, from which he never swerved, to abide by the Petition of Right, but there was nothing in the law to make him summon a Parliament if he could live lawfully of his own. And there was just a chance of his being able to do this, if he played his cards correctly. He had never foregone his claim to the customs, and with the nation's trade steadily increasing, these formed a source of revenue sufficient to stave off bankruptcy so long as expenses were kept at a minimum. Peace was concluded with France and Spain, and for eleven years of personal government the nation was seething with discontent in a time of rich, material prosperity.

It is well that Charles was neither a genius himself nor capable of profiting by the genius of others. It was better that he should die than that the whole current of our history should be turned back and made to flow down the well-walled channel of an efficient absolutism. He had in his service two able and single-hearted men, acting in complete harmony and devotion to his interests, Thomas Wentworth and William Laud. He gave his full trust to neither. It is pathetic to read their correspondence, when Wentworth, or the Earl of Strafford as he subsequently became, was Lord Deputy of Ireland and Laud was Archbishop of Canterbury. Elizabeth would have known how to value and profit by such ministers. They were exponents of the Tudor system, born out of due time, trying to prop up an edifice whose foundations were already undermined. Strafford was no Continental bureaucrat. The lawless and incompetent regime of Charles and Buckingham had gone against the deepest instincts in his nature; he opposed it and manfully supported the Constitutional settlement embodied in the Petition of Right. But when he saw that Parliament intended to stop nowhere short of seizing the executive and reducing the King to a puppet, he ranged himself on the side of Constitutional precedent and came over to the King's service.

Laud and Strafford had no illusions as to the desperate nature of the task before them. If the King was to govern the country, it must be in the spirit and after the example of the Tudors, and not with the blundering ineptitude of Charles Stuart. Elizabeth and her father had known how to keep favourites in their places and, on due occasion, bring them to the block, the Stuarts were more inclined to fawn on a Buckingham than be advised by a Bacon; the Tudors had taken care to maintain a competent staff of ministers, Charles had an incurable preference for mediocrities; the Tudors had invariably an eye to facts and knew intuitively where to stop. Charles took himself quite seriously as a god on earth and lived in a world of his own illusions. All this, in the view of Strafford and Laud, must be changed; if the King's government was to be maintained it must be made efficient—" thorough " was the word they used to designate their policy.

But neither the King nor the court by which he was surrounded was capable of any sort of thoroughness. Everywhere the two friends found themselves confronted by a dull and dead weight of resistance, for which their code word was " Lady Mora ", or delay. Her ladyship had not been an unknown character in past periods

of English history; Piers Plowman had known her as Lady Meed, and this side of her character was only too apparent to the Archbishop, who wrote, in 1634, "the Lady Mora commends her to you, and tells you she would make more haste did she not stay to accommodate private ends." Laud with his friend Bishop Juxon was striving to get the King's finances in order, while Strafford was endeavouring to make the Irish revenue meet expenses, but they were thwarted at every turn by the dishonesty and favouritism that the King would not check and sometimes openly abetted, as when he roused his Lord Deputy to indignant protest by squandering part of his much-needed Irish money on a free gift to a nobleman.

Ever since the accession of the Stuarts, the crumbling of the Tudor system had been marked by an ever-increasing corruption in high places. The rich men who surrounded the King had not even to wait for his power to be paralyzed, before putting into practice the methods of diverting public money into their own purses, that their descendants were to perfect when the whole of political power had been gathered into their hands. It was their consistent struggle against these corrupt influences that was the real cause of the murders, which we cannot honour by the name of judicial, of Strafford and Laud, and of the obloquy which has followed them down the ages. "He crushed and ruined," we read in *Social England* about Strafford, "without adequate cause, many of the highest people in the land." In other words, the Lord Deputy's hand was heavy upon the corrupt and unruly magnates who would have reduced government to a farce. In the most celebrated case of all, he court-martialled a Lord Mountnorris, whom he had reason to suspect of peculation, whose relatives had been openly insubordinate even to the extent of dropping a stool on the Deputy's gouty toe, and who had himself uttered threats of dire revenge on the King's representative and his own military superior. One is astonished at Strafford's moderation in contemptuously reprieving the death sentence of the court martial, contenting himself with putting Mountnorris, for the time, out of the way of doing further mischief. But in "crushing the highest in the land" he had committed the unforgivable sin, nor has he ever been forgiven for his writing, in a moment of anger, of the rich politicians who were determined to make all government impossible, that they deserved to be whipped into their senses.

He saw clearly enough that the King's only chance of success

lay in his keeping out of foreign troubles. He had a clear premonition of what fate would be his master's and his own should bankruptcy put the King at the Parliament's mercy. "Good my Lord," he wrote to the Archbishop when the King was contemplating the madness of plunging into the Thirty Years' War on the Continent, "if it be not too late, use your best to divert us from this war . . . it will necessarily put the King into all the highways possible, else will he not be able to subsist under the charge of it: and if these fail, the next will be the sacrificing those who have been his ministers therein. I profess I would readily lay down my life to serve my master, my heart should give him that very freely; but it would something trouble me to find even those, that drew and engaged him in all these mischiefs, busy about me themselves in fitting the halter to my neck."

Strafford and Laud were no doubt in the wrong with their strenuous cult of efficiency, and however little either of them may have desired to violate the Constitution, they could only have succeeded by substituting centralization and bureaucracy for the liberties sanctified by English law. But they failed nobly in a hopeless cause and in the service of a hopeless master. On the whole they impress us as being the two most considerable men of affairs in the years between the fall of Bacon and the rise of Cromwell. While they were cleansing the Augean stables of corruption and chafing at Lady Mora, Charles was drifting blindly and heedlessly to his doom. Each of that unfortunate trio to whom we have already alluded, Charles I, Louis XVI, and Nicholas II, had a wife to whom he was deeply attached, whose will-power was in excess of his own, and whose one notion of governing a Kingdom was by petty intrigue for the maximum of power. Marie, as her husband called her, was ever at hand to confirm his worst impulses, and though anything but a religious woman, she became the centre of Catholic plots that seemed the more formidable because they were only vaguely known. It was bad enough that the court swarmed with Catholics, and that these included at least one of the King's ministers.

Meanwhile England, with her record of failures behind her and her sword-arm paralyzed from lack of funds, had almost ceased to count in the affairs of Europe. This, under the circumstances, was no bad thing; no power threatened her with invasion, and while Europe was torn asunder by murderous contention between Christians about Christ's religion, England was growing rapidly and peacefully in prosperity; trade was flourishing, taxation was light. But those

patriots who would have liked to see England play the same sensational role in defence of Protestantism as that by which the Swedish King, Gustavus Adolphus, lost his own life and overstrained the resources of his country, were patriotically humiliated. Despite the fears of Strafford, Charles managed to avoid this crowning madness, and it is to his credit that he determined, at all costs, to provide England with what was vital to her safety and welfare, an efficient navy. He strained the spirit though not, apparently, the letter of the law, by requiring the ports to contribute to the provision of ships, and presently extended this obligation to the whole Kingdom on the logical ground that all men were equally concerned in maintaining the fleet. The money was honestly devoted to the purpose for which it was asked, and the fleet was able to take the sea strong enough to perform the very necessary service of keeping in check the Moorish pirates, who had taken to preying on our commerce in the Channel itself, and carrying off poor coast-dwellers from their beds to indescribable horrors of slavery.

This, however, was not enough to excuse the levy of any sort of contribution in the eyes of men who were more concerned in paralyzing the King than in securing the safety of the country. A rich Buckingham squire called Hampden refused to pay a penny unless it was sanctioned by Parliament, fearing to violate the principles of Magna Charta. He was following upon the lines laid down by Sir Edward Coke, and his disinterestedness is not in question, since the sum asked for was trifling. The judges decided, by a majority, against him, though their decision loses some weight by the fact that the King had made it clear that a judge's tenure of office depended more on his subservience than his impartiality. On this occasion, however, there seems no reason to doubt that they went exhaustively into the case, and gave the correct legal decision. But nice balancing of legal precedent was unlikely to convince either side. To Strafford it seemed that the King's government must be carried on in despite of such factious obstruction as that of Hampden, to Hampden any evil that could befall the nation would be more tolerable than the successful establishment of a power whose triumph would mean the death of Magna Charta and the ancient liberties of England.

The most decisive condemnation of Charles's personal government is not that he was a tyrant or cruel, for he was nothing of the sort, nor that he was lawless—for after Buckingham's death he was generally on the right side of the law—but in the fact that his govern-

ment utterly failed to commend itself to his people. It was, in fact, notoriously unpopular. Even through Oxford, the headquarters of loyalty, he could go in state amidst cold looks and almost without applause. Englishmen could not understand the icy, enigmatical figure of one who was every inch a King; they would have preferred the good, round oaths of Elizabeth or even the shambling garrulity of James—anything to this. The worst judgments were passed, the wildest scandals flew, the atmosphere had that oppressive calm that forbodes the thunder. And soon, in the north, clouds began to gather and the first rumblings broke the stillness.

10

The Collapse of the Tudor System

The Tudor system, as worked by the Stuarts, was to receive its death blow not from foreign war, as Strafford had foreboded, but from the revolt of Calvinist Scotland. If Charles had not been utterly blind to the spiritual forces around him and to the lessons of recent history, he would have seen that his greatest danger lay in some spark from the terrible Kirk of Knox and Melville setting ablaze the suppressed Puritanism of England, and he would at least have had the sense to leave that Kirk severely alone. But only a man fatally bent on his own destruction would have had the madness not only to wound the Kirk in her tenderest point, which was the independence of her congregations, but also to wound the nobles, who had robbed her, in theirs, which was their pockets. For Charles commenced his reign by an act which, in anybody who had the least sense of the risks he was running would have been heroic. He revoked the grants of Church lands and tithes by which, as Knox had put it, so much of the Church's property had been given to the Devil. The fury of the nobles knew no bounds, and even though the matter was compromised on very fair terms to themselves, they were perpetually apprehensive of some new attempt on the part of the Crown to curb their pretensions, perhaps even to take away their hereditary jurisdictions.

Having thus made an enemy of "the Devil" it only remained for Charles to do the same by "God". In this he was aided and abetted by Laud, who appears to have been completely ignorant of Scottish affairs, and to have imagined that it would be a simple matter of ecclesiastical administration to force upon the Kirk the

abomination of the English liturgy, made even less palatable by some ritualistic additions invented for the occasion. The result was immediate and overwhelming; the whole of Scotland rose in revolt, God and the Devil now in whole-hearted alliance. A covenant was taken, an army was raised, and Charles found himself not only at war, but at war with the elect in one of his own Kingdoms, with scarcely anybody willing to fight for him, and with no means of raising funds short of summoning a Parliament. And he might have known that after eleven years of "Thorough", Parliament would grant him money on no terms consistent with his prerogative. The Tudor system was, in fact, doomed.

Strafford, now recognized too late as the strong man among the King's advisers, made heroic efforts to stem the tide; he had plans for bringing over an army from Ireland, but it was in vain. The King tried to mobilize an army; many of the troops never arrived, those that did ran away from an enemy they wanted to see win. A Parliament came and went; it was evident that even a temporary dole could only be obtained at the price of crippled monarchy. The Scots now took the offensive, marched into Yorkshire threatening London, sat quietly down and demanded a substantial indemnity as the price of their withdrawal. It was checkmate; if the Scots were not paid, nothing stood between them and the capital, and the King had no money to pay them with. He therefore took a step which was equivalent to capitulation when he summoned another Parliament—the most famous of all Parliaments. He was utterly at their mercy and they were in no mood to show mercy.

This Long Parliament, in its opening phase, was one of the most representative and united that ever sat. A wave of national and Protestant enthusiasm had swept it to Westminster. It had a foreign army, for the Scots were still foreigners, encamped in England, and was in no hurry to get rid of them, for they were a pistol to hold at the King's head. The Parliamentary leaders had an understanding which, whether it was justifiable or not, was certainly treasonable, with the enemy. To make the King's position doubly hopeless they had the London mob on their side, which could be whipped up by the Puritan preachers, and which they did not hesitate to use in order to blackmail the King. Under these circumstances their course was easy, and it only rested with them to decide how far they should drive home their advantage.

They were men of outstanding ability, rather than genius. Pym, King Pym as he came to be called when at the height of his influence,

impresses us as having been a masterly politician. a great Parliament man, but hardly a statesman. His chief idea was to play the game against the King to the bitter end. As for Hampden, he was a respectable county magnate, but, like the other Parliamentary leaders of the left wing, he showed few signs of constructive statesmanship. To go on striking knock-down blows at a defenceless opponent was easy, to find a substitute for the Tudor system of government was a different matter. The strength of these Parliament men was in their attachment to the principles of English Common Law and the liberties of the subject, though it is characteristic that Pym's most memorable defence of these latter occurs in his plea, in 1628, for the severe punishment of a clergyman with the too royalist sentiments of whose sermons Pym and his associates disagreed. It is significant that Pym was known, in the Long Parliament, as the close confederate of the Russell Earl of Bedford. It was the as yet unformed party of which the Russells were the most prominent representatives, whose interests he was in truth supporting. It was probably his plan to exclude both King and Church from any effective power in the State, in order to make way for the dominance of men of good family and substantial means like himself and the majority of his fellow members, and he would have been gravely scandalized at the democratic theories that were, after his death, bandied about at the headquarters of the New Model Army.

In a rapid series of measures the whole edifice of royal authority was shattered. Parliaments were made triennial; the prerogative jurisdiction was swept away; the Crown was deprived of the right to levy Customs or Ship Money; all disputed constitutional questions were decided in favour of Parliament; Laud went to the Tower; Strafford was done to death; Parliament placed itself beyond the reach of its constituents by a bill forbidding it to be dissolved without its own consent. These last two measures were forced upon the King by the mob, which surrounded the palace and made him afraid not so much for his own safety as that of the Queen. It must be said, on the other side, that the Queen had helped to bring this about by promoting an ill-advised plot to get Strafford out of the Tower, and that her constant petty intrigue had the worst effects in keeping the sore open. None the less, if the King had known how to accept defeat in a generous spirit or the Parliamentary leaders had known when to stop, a working settlement might have been arrived at which would have left the King with all the dignity and

something more than the power of his successors of the Whig regime, and would have carried the revolution about as far as and no further than the majority of members desired to see it carried.

Unfortunately neither side was in the mood at which a compromise might have been arrived at. The King was as blind to facts as ever and his opponents had some excuse for not trusting him. He was down and they did not mean to let him get up again. Forces stronger than they could control were beginning to sweep them along. The dams of authority that had kept back Puritanism were broken, and the black tide threatened to flood the whole country. The attack now began to concentrate upon the Church, and for the first time the King found himself supported by a considerable body of opinion among his subjects. The Church of England at this, her brightest period, was a living force fitted to cope even with Puritanism. Besides, the characteristically English instinct of moderation and fair play began to be enlisted on the King's side. Some of the victorious faction began to break away, and, though the names were not invented, a Whig and a Tory party confronted each other in the Commons. Charles even began to choose his ministers from among the Parliamentary ranks, and Pym himself is said to have been offered the Exchequer. But Pym's position was like that of a modern Labour leader, who dares not accept office with a capitalist government for fear of losing his influence with his party.

He and his party friends were determined to ruffle up the waning opposition to the King. They prepared a long and partial statement of the case against him, which they were only able to carry through the House by a few votes, and hardly without bloodshed. They were said to be preparing an impeachment against the Queen. And then, to save his beloved Marie, and partly at her instigation, the King took the human and honourable, but fatally foolish course of trying to get in his own blow first, and to bring up the most prominent of the Parliamentary leaders to take their trial before the Lords for the treason of which they had been at least technically guilty in their dealings with the Scots. He even made a clumsy attempt to arrest the members in the House by coming down from Whitehall at a snail's pace followed by a rabble of soldiers. Of course the accused members did not wait to be seized, and the King found himself branded at once with the odium of tyranny and the contempt that follows a clumsy fiasco.

11

The Beginnings of Expansion

The impulse to expansion overseas was the property of no government nor sect, but arose naturally and spontaneously in the heart of the nation. By no other colonizing power was there so little attempt either to force or direct it during the first half of the sixteenth century. England lagged woefully behind in the race and, in fact, came in for little more than the leavings of her more splendid or pushing rivals. The Spaniard came looking for gold and silver, the Portuguese and the Dutchman for spices and other tropical products, and the riches of the Indies were at their disposal. It was not the will but the power that was lacking to Englishmen of following in their footsteps. The first attempts to attain a footing on the American Continent, in the reign of Elizabeth, had failed, despite the energy of Sir Humphrey Gilbert and the genius of Raleigh, partly because the object sought was Eldorado and quick returns, and partly because the indiscipline of the Elizabethans was such that they had no stomach for the patient labour of a pioneer settlement, and were too much addicted to piracy and mutiny beyond the line to admit of their making a fair start with the task of colonizing.

Neither failure nor delay could baulk, in the long run, the mighty but gradual urge of the English people to expand beyond the borders of their homeland. One such epoch of expansion there had already been, following on the consciousness of national unity in the thirteenth century. But the effort had died away, and the attempt of England to become a Continental power had proved too much for her strength. By the end of the sixteenth century, England, under the greatest of her royal Houses, had found herself again. Her repulse of Spain and the Counter Reformation had united her as never before, and the union of crowns under James I removed the Scottish menace. Peace with Spain diverted her superfluous energy from adventure to business. The new order of society, founded on the plunder of the monasteries and the employment of capital, entailed a considerable unemployed surplus of population. Civil and religious differences made England a sad place of abode for those who happened to be on the oppressed side. Moreover, to the adventurous minds of our ancestors, a halo of romance clung about these distant and new-discovered lands, with all their unknown possibilities.

" O, my America, my New-found-land ! " writes Jack, afterwards Dean Donne, in a far from reputable poem to one of his lady loves. Finally, a genuine love of and pride in England inspired some of the best of our pioneers, Raleigh, Courthope, Captain John Smith, and many another hero of days when men bulked almost superhuman upon the out trail.

In colonial adventure it would be less true to say that England chose the better part than that she had it thrust upon her in her own despite. The glittering prizes of adventure were too often in climates unsuited to be a home for Europeans. To bring back gold and to sell cloves and nutmegs at several hundred per cent profit was one thing, but for the parent stock to strike out branches and take root beyond the seas was another and nobler. This was far from obvious to the men of the Renaissance, though it would have seemed the most natural thing in the world to a Greek city, where a portion of the inhabitants might at any time be moved to depart, with all they had, amid the lamentations of their fellows, to plant another and independent city somewhere on the shores of the wine-dark Mediterranean. England took the Greek way in North America, though it was long before the new settlements were moved to the Greek extreme of breaking connection altogether with the place of their origin.

With various motives and with ever-varying legal status little groups of Englishmen made good their footing upon what is now the Eastern seaboard of the United States. Having come last, the Englishman had to take what the Spaniard had left, and even this was begrudged him ; not the least among the perils to be faced by the first settlers was lest the Spaniards should come and wipe out these intruders upon their monopoly west of Pope Borgia's line. It was soon enough discovered that gold mines and quick returns were an empty dream, that it was as much as our pioneers could hope for to secure a bare existence by hardship and the sweat of their brows. For the majority, even existence was not to be secured ; half the Pilgrim Fathers died off in the first winter, and in Virginia some four-fifths of the inhabitants succumbed during the " starving time ".

Compared with those of other powers, our efforts at colonization were to the last degree haphazard and uncoordinated. Before the middle of the sixteenth century it would be stretching language to talk of an English colonial policy, and to trace the broad outlines of development is a task of no small difficulty. However divergent

the fortunes of the different settlements, they had at least these two prime requisites in common, a sufficiency of men who, for one reason or another, would prefer to take their chance overseas to remaining at home, and enough disposable capital for getting these men across the sea and providing them with the means of making a start. Neither of these conditions would have existed in the Middle Ages. Then every man had his niche in a society relatively stable, and whose resources were not so far in excess of its immediate needs as to permit of their being saved and invested in the hope of distant returns. The changes brought about by the Renaissance and the Reformation had thrown both ideas and the social system into the melting pot, and by the time that James I ascended the throne, the conditions were ripe for capitalist enterprise on a scale sufficient for effective colonization.

Even the advance in prosperity under Elizabeth and the wise measures of her Council could not avail to end the pauperism that had followed in the wake of capitalist enterprise. A fair surplus of unplaced and unemployed men might always be counted upon for any venture that offered the prospect of a living and the offchance of wealth. There were not only the economically but also the spiritually unplaced. The efforts of Church and Crown after uniformity were enough to render almost intolerable the lives of those who valued above meat and raiment their freedom to worship God in their own way. Finally, peace with Spain, and the curmudgeonly attitude of the authorities towards the more or less patriotic service of the Jolly Roger, turned the minds of many an adventurer towards a more regular and profitable sphere of activity.

So much for the men—for the wealth the increasing prosperity of the nation would provide. Elizabeth's regular war with Spain had resulted in a temporary check to the advance of wealth; it was impossible even for her to indulge in the luxury of war without having to foot the bill out of the taxpayers' pockets. Bad harvests and the plague had supplemented man's efforts for his own destruction. But with the peace and the union of the two Kingdoms the tide of prosperity began to swell and continued fairly steady until, with the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, England was drawn into the fringe of a religious struggle. And just as the sweet showers of April had formerly impelled men to go on pilgrimages, so now did the springtide of worldly success lead to the formation of joint stock companies for every sort of adventure. Money was cheap, amazingly so, in those days of risks, if we may accept Dr. Scott's estimate of

the rate of interest on loans as 8 or 9 per cent. Meanwhile the progress of invention was as yet barely perceptible, and the prospects of big returns from foreign enterprise were sure to attract investors or, as they were called in those days, adventurers.

The most dazzling prospects of all, for those who were prepared to take risks, were presented by voyages to the tropics and particularly to the East Indies. The great East India Company was formed in 1600, at first as a regulated company on the model of the Merchant Adventurers, in which every voyage was a separate venture, financed by its own particular group of adventurers. Gradually, however, the old loose medieval type of association was superseded; men put their money not into the voyage but the company, and shares came to be disposed of in the market quite after the modern fashion. But in the East India Islands, with their almost priceless spices and sandalwood, our merchants had now to face rivals of a more formidable nature than the Portuguese. The Calvinist Dutch were, in matters of business, quite insensitive to the sentimental considerations of friendship that swayed some English Protestants. Their East India Company had many times more capital than our own, and was consequently able to maintain an overwhelming superiority in ships and fortified posts. They regarded the Englishmen as interlopers, and even when a sort of understanding was patched up between the governments at home, they continued to harass and even massacre Englishmen who poached upon what they considered to be their preserves.

Just as the Spaniards and Portuguese, by establishing themselves in the most coveted parts of the West, caused Englishmen to gravitate to the temperate coast of North America, so the Dutch, by edging them out of the Islands, directed their efforts towards the mainland of India, to do business with the Empire of the Great Moguls, then at its height. A factory at Surat was the insignificant beginning of a vaster Empire that was to stretch from Peshawur to Cape Comorin. No dream of such an eventuality could have crossed the minds of these early traders. They were out to make such profits as they could by favour of a potentate whose power and splendour outshone that of any European monarch. We have the memoirs of an able and observant Englishman, Sir Thomas Roe, who was sent by James I at the expense of the East India Company, as ambassador to the court at Agra, then under the hard-drinking, cruel, but by no means incompetent Jehangir, who would bastinado a courtier in the morning for remembering the convivialities of the

night before, who disciplined an intriguing son by conducting him down a mile-long avenue of that son's impaled yet living supporters, but who was nevertheless, in his way, a man of taste and letters, for whose favour our handful of traders were respectfully solicitous.

In the West, the unsuccessful experiments in colonization of Gilbert and Raleigh did not deter those who calculated that with proper backing and management a very different result might be secured. The commercial booms of James I's reign caused capital to flow freely into Western as well as Eastern colonial enterprise. The settlement of Virginia was taken up in good earnest, and though the colony passed through severe vicissitudes and only escaped a fresh destruction by the skin of its teeth, matters gradually righted themselves on the development of a lucrative trade in tobacco. The Bermudas and various of the West India Islands were occupied less as conquests than as speculations. On Newfoundland we had established a footing as early as Elizabeth's reign. A haphazard and straggling empire was beginning to form itself on no more exalted principle than that of securing profit wherever it could be obtained.

Meanwhile a development of even greater importance had been taking place, North of where the English colonies were cut into two by the Dutch and Swedish settlements round the mouth of the Hudson. A congregation of Puritans, whom persecution had driven from England to Holland, resolved to brave the perils of the Atlantic in order to found a settlement where the godly could worship God in their own way and, as it turned out, exchange the role of the persecuted for that of the persecutor. These were the famous Pilgrim Fathers, and by the mis-direction of the voyage and something like a strike on the part of the crew they were compelled to shift for themselves as best they might on an inhospitable shore far to the Northward of their proposed landing place. They were soon followed by the numerous and powerful settlement of Massachusetts, a community of Puritans who thought it better to reign in America than to serve in England, and who were constantly reinforced from home. The process was repeated when certain earnest believers were, in their turn, driven out of Massachusetts and became the Pilgrim Fathers of yet another settlement.

Thus, to the North, were growing up a little cluster of Puritan communities known as New England, whose unit of government was the township and whose principles were fiercely democratic. To the South was the Colony of Virginia, aristocratic, and tending to consist

of a number of large plantations or big estates, each a self-contained proprietary unit, with its own wharf and ultimately its complement of slaves. To the North of Virginia sprung up the colony of Maryland, founded by Lord Baltimore as a refuge for the intolerably oppressed English Catholics, and which developed, in subsequent time, into a debatable land between the North and South of the American colonies. On the other side of New England, to the North of all, was Sir Ferdinando Gorges's proprietary colony of Maine and Mason's of New Hampshire.

Thus, at first sight, the English colonies seem only to agree in being all different from each other. In contrast to the deliberate and not always unenlightened control of Spain and the scientific financial policy of Holland, informed by the Jews of Amsterdam, is the series of experiments by which England blundered into the beginnings of her Empire. Despite the writings of Bacon, Raleigh and others, no very clear or consistent idea seems to have been entertained as to the functions or nature of a colony nor of its relations with the government at home. Perhaps it was better that the government should learn by its own mistakes than that it should start with a cut and dried system which it was determined to enforce at all costs. On the whole the first two Stuarts were both tolerant and reasonable in their treatment of the colonies, and allowed them to develop on their own lines without too much attempt at interference. They were more inclined to bargain than to command.

For the unique and vital feature that distinguished these first attempts at colonization was that where Englishmen established themselves, the Common Law went with them, and with the Common Law that stubborn clinging to established right that is its spirit. The King was no administrative despot; once he had conceded a privilege it was not his to take back. The Charter of a colony could only be revoked if it could be proved before a judge that it was legally invalid, but that was for the court and not the Crown to decide. True to the spirit of this Common Law, the rights by which colonies were established were of the most arbitrary and seemingly irrational nature. The hoary principles of feudalism were resurrected, and the Earl of Carlisle would be allowed to hold an island or Lord Baltimore a strip of the mainland on precisely the same tenure as Fitzosborne had received Chester and Odo of Bayeux Kent from the Conqueror. The proprietor or the proprietary company was theoretically owner of every inch of land in the colony and entitled not only to a quit rent but to an oath of fealty from every

landholder. The governor was his steward and the executive his servants.

Such a state of things might have been expected to produce the most arbitary tyranny, but for the fact that there was not only a letter of the Common Law, but also a spirit that was very much alive at this time. Both at home and overseas Englishmen were possessed of an uncritical but none the less practical sense of their personal liberties. Magna Charta was on every man's lips, and even such unhistorical fictions as a legal principle of *De Tallagio Non Concedendo* were used as weapons to ward off encroaching authority. The long and short of it was that neither from a King nor a proprietor nor anybody else was the freeborn Englishman going to accept tyranny, and above all things, he was not going to be taxed nor governed without his consent. Thus, even in the aristocratic and cavalier Virginia, not a score of years have passed before a representative assembly springs almost spontaneously into existence. The usual course of affairs in a proprietary or crown colony is a struggle between a nominated executive and a representative legislature, with the scales heavily weighted in favour of the latter by the power of the purse and, in the last resort, of resistance.

In the new England colonies democracy was more logical and uncompromising in its expression. The Massachusetts company took the decisive step of transferring their charter to the colony, and thus of becoming their own proprietors. Henceforward the ties that bound them to the motherland were of the slenderest, and an injudicious attempt to assert the authority of the Crown came within an ace of anticipating the revolution of the next century. For Archbishop Laud, with his uncompromising tactlessness, had seen the danger that lay in this nest of Puritanism, and would have brought the colony to heel by placing it under the governance of that fine old Elizabethan veteran, Sir Ferdinando Gorges. The ancestors of the men who were to throw the tea into Boston harbour were arming and fortifying in order to resist to the death this infringement of their liberties, but the troubles that were overwhelming King and Archbishop at home gave them something else to think of than applying " Thorough " to Massachusetts. So independent had these new England colonies grown, that four of them actually entered into an alliance for purposes of mutual defence and support.

Even in New England, however, there was no very serious thought, as yet, of formal independence. The infant colonies were not strong enough to hold their own, without support, against powerful and

ambitious rivals. Both for military and economic reasons, England and her colonies had need of each other, and there was, on the whole, a fair give and take between the two. If Virginia was under the protection of the British navy it was but fair that she should send her tobacco to England at least to pay revenue before reshipment for abroad, but then it was also fair that attempts to start tobacco planting at home should be put down, as they were, with a strong hand. Charles I, whatever his other faults, was a good friend to the colonies; under his auspices a strong and able committee was appointed to advise the Crown in its dealings with them, and a policy of political and economic union, to the partial or total exclusion of other nations, began slowly to take shape.

CHAPTER V

THE QUINTESSENCE OF PROTESTANTISM

1

The Case of Ulster

If it was Scotland that brought about the fall of the King's attempt to carry on the Tudor system in spite of his Parliament, it was the rebellion in Ireland that precipitated the English civil war. That most unhappy country had been reduced, by the merciless energy of Mountjoy, to at least the semblance of submission on the death of Elizabeth. The chances of breaking the English yoke by open resistance or by the intervention of Spain were faint indeed. But Irish civilization was still alive and carrying on an heroic struggle to preserve its continuity. There was even something of a revival of native literature, now becoming more than ever tinged with that wistful melancholy which is partly, no doubt, the result of climate and temperament, but which has been intensified out of measure by humiliation and stupid tyranny. This forlorn hope of continuing the true glories of Ireland is none the less of importance becaue its fills so small a space in ordinary history. If it failed to maintain the line of bards and scholars, it at least succeeded in keeping alive the spirit of Irish patriotism. Ireland may have lost freedom, wealth, happiness, language, the best of her children, all in the world that she possessed, but she has fought hard to keep her soul.

The Catholic Church, whose dominance she had once resisted with more independence than any other province, and which had all over the world stood for the negation of patriotism, had now become the very symbol and strength of Irish nationality. When the English were brutally putting down all facilities for Irish education, it was being kept alive abroad at such centres as the Franciscan colleges at Rome and Douai, where the Irish language could be spoken and an Irish culture maintained without incurring the penalties of the law. Meanwhile Catholicism continued to be proscribed in Ireland; James I was horrified at the imputation that he might be disposed to tolerance. It is probable that weakness had more part than

fanaticism in hardening the English attitude. The first two Stuarts were perpetually out at elbows and could not afford to maintain a strong garrison. Tentative experiments in relaxation were not encouraging; the nation was so whole-heartedly Catholic that priests and monasteries seemed ready to spring from the soil, and the governors of Ireland were afraid to give the people their heads lest they should get altogether out of control.

It was in the reign of James I that the most enduring if not the greatest of Ireland's wrongs was perpetrated in the plantation of Ulster. The system of plantation, which was nothing more nor less than that of robbing the Irish of their own lands in order to make way for British adventurers, had been started in the time of Elizabeth and continued to that of Cromwell. Though this iniquity was perpetrated throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, the extraordinary assimilative capacity of the Irish nation was capable, sooner or later, of absorbing the new settlers as it had absorbed the Normans, with the exception of the colony in the Northern province, which developed into a separate nation, fiercely hostile to Irish tradition and complicating any effort to bring about a satisfactory settlement of an age-long grievance. Why this should have been so in Ulster and nowhere else will be fairly evident from a glance at the map, especially when it is observed that the Protestant nucleus has tended to shift from its original location, and to concentrate in the corner nearest of all to Great Britain. It is as if the population of the larger island had overflowed its limits to just such an extent as to submerge that corner of Ireland nearest to it. That this overflow was no new thing is evident from the very name of O'Donnell, which is of course the same as that of the great Highland and Hebridean clan Macdonald.

This sept, and that of O'Neill, had been foremost in keeping alive Irish resistance in the North. By the accession of James I things had at least nominally quieted down; the two chiefs had been received into favour, to the no small indignation of English commanders who had fought against them, and they were now Earls and supposed to be peaceful subjects. It was too much to expect this to endure, and as has nearly always happened in Irish history, any prospect of a peaceful settlement was wrecked by a quarrel between Irishmen. The O'Neill chief, the Earl of Tyrone, fell foul of a vassal of his, Sir Donnell O'Cahan, and the Earl was summoned to London to have the case determined. The English record of bad faith in the past perhaps made him unduly suspicious, for, without

any proof that has yet come to light, he leapt to the conclusion that this was a plot to get hold of his person. He, therefore, and the O'Donnell chief, took ship and fled from the country, thereby, in the eyes of the government, branding themselves as open rebels.

The Lord Deputy at this time was Sir Arthur Chichester, of a gentleness and enlightenment remarkable for one in his position, and he conceived the idea of taking advantage of the situation to initiate a reform that should make the North into the garden of Ireland without injuring anybody. The flight of the two Earls had thrown everything into the melting pot. Under Irish law, the whole of a tribe's land belonged to that tribe and not to the chief, but to English notions this law was "damnable", the lands belonged to the chief and nobody else. When, therefore, the chief's lands were forfeited for open treason, the whole of them reverted to the Crown, and by this iniquitous legal fiction the real owners, the poor Irishmen, had no title in them whatever. Had Chichester's advice been followed, however, little harm need have been done. There was land enough to spare, after satisfying all the requirements of the natives, and it was this land that Chichester proposed to allot to the new settlers, men who should introduce the most advanced agricultural methods, instead of the miserable scratching of the soil by light wooden ploughs tied to the tails of ponies.

Not for the first nor the last time, the government at home disdained to tread the path of moderation, and made their will their counsellor. Chichester's wise advice was rejected, and the settlement was carried through with all the brutal injustice that could be devised. The rights and feelings of the inhabitants were alike ignored; their lands were thrown to any capitalist adventurer who could promise a sufficient rent. From the business point of view, the enterprise was well organized; pushing cultivators and handicraftsmen thronged into the province, which soon began greatly to increase in visible prosperity. Not only was the soil made to yield far more under the new methods, but during the deputyship of Strafford the cultivation of flax was stimulated and a powerful economic bond established between Ulster and Lancashire, for the growing industry of Manchester had need of Irish linen yarn to work into fustians with cotton and also to re-export as finished linen to Ireland.

Thus was a community planted and established in Ireland, where it was in closest touch of all with Great Britain, of a quality and religion diametrically opposite to that of their fellow Irishmen.

All sorts of settlers emigrated there, but in time the Scottish Calvinist element came to predominate, partly because Ulster was at the very door of the Lowlands, partly because the ecclesiastical policy of the Stuarts caused many good Presbyterians to emigrate, and partly because the Scots took more kindly to the country, and even roused the wrath of the home government by daring to intermarry with the Irish. But the rightful owners of the land, who had been reduced to being hewers of wood and drawers of water, nursed bitterness in their hearts, and dreamed of the time when the great O'Neill Earl would return to deliver them. There were not wanting English observers who foresaw that, at the first convenient opportunity, they would rise and cut the throats of the scattered settlers. The curse of Columcille might yet fall on the violators of his Derry.

Meanwhile the native Irish culture was suffusing the clouds that darkened over the land, with a rich and pathetic sunset glory. The bards now began to forsake the elaborate measures that had appealed to the cultivated taste of well-to-do patrons, and sang to the people in simple and appealing strains. The last great contest of the bards took place early in the seventeenth century and lasted for years. The subject of contention was that of the ancient glories of Munster as compared with those of the rest of Ireland. Every branch of scholarship was kept alive, and it was in the fourth decade of the century that one of the most famous of Irish histories, the *Annals of the Four Masters*, was being written. But the shadow of night was fast climbing the sky, the long night of Ireland's silence and misery. "I am wasting and perishing withgrief, " wrote Hugh Bourke[1] " to see how insensibly nigher and nigher draws the catastrophe which must inflict mortal wounds on our country."

The weak tyranny of the Stuart regime was continued by two deputies after Chichester, the second of whom, Viscount Falkland, attempted to make way for another plantation by deliberately fastening a false charge of treason on the Irish clan of the O'Byrnes. Then came Wentworth, the strongest and ablest Englishman of his time, and started a furiously efficient pro-consulship. The Irish Parliament was overawed into voting supplies; corruption and insubordination were put down with a high hand; the finances were put in order, the seas cleared of pirates, the Ulster linen industry put on a firm basis. Unfortunately Wentworth, like the Elizabethan he was, had no care for Irish liberty; he had that fatal notion, unhappily too familiar, that the Irish were an inferior race who only

[1] *Irish Nationality* by Mrs. J. R. Green, p 147.

wanted a few years of firm government to reduce them to a contented obedience. If he founded the prosperity of Ulster by encouraging the linen trade, he did much to establish the poverty of Southern Ireland by suppressing its woollen industry in the interests of England. And he was about to crown the long series of land robberies by extending the policy of Naboth's vineyard to the hitherto untouched province of Connaught.

When he was withdrawn and England's hands were tied by her own domestic differences, the inevitable catastrophe happened. Embittered by the past and despairing as to the future, the Irish broke into desperate rebellion. This was worst of all in Ulster, whence lurid and exaggerated accounts of horrors reached England. It will never be known, even approximately, how many of the settlers were murdered outright, or were turned out of their homes to perish of hardship in the endeavour to reach Dublin. At the lowest computation it must have been terrible enough ; no people who have been robbed of land and liberty, least of all Irishmen, are apt to be too gentle in their methods of retaliation. The English Puritans regarded the rising with the same feelings of horror as our grandfathers felt on hearing of the massacre of Cawnpore. Vengeance must be taken, complete and terrible ; the land must be reconquered with more severity than ever—but by whom ? The King was unquestionably the lawful head of the army. But the King at the head of a victorious army might be more threatening to the liberties of Parliament than any Irish rebellion—nay, the King might be found on the side of the rebels. Parliament therefore threw over the last vestige of legal justification by demanding the control of the militia. " Not for an hour ! " was the King's answer.

2

The First Civil War

It was the mistake of the Parliamentary leaders that they pushed their advantage over the King to such immoderate lengths that only a civil war could decide the issue, a war which, if it were to last for any length of time, must almost certainly prove fatal to their cause whichever way it went. Once the force of militant Puritanism was fairly unchained, no one could say to what excesses it might not run nor whether Parliament itself would be able to control a victorious army of the elect.

The war, like most wars, pursues a simple enough course when viewed from a sufficiently comprehensive standpoint. In one sense it resembles the Wars of the Roses in being a struggle of the more civilized against the more backward part of the country. Parliament has the firm support of London, and of most of the fertile Southern and Eastern Lowlands of England; the King's strength lies in the Northern and Western fringe, the more mountainous and less civilized regions. The Tudor system had ceased to command the allegiance of the more progressive section of Englishmen, for the wealth and brains of the nation had not yet begun to concentrate in the North. The struggle resolves itself into an effort, on the King's part, to close in upon London, for which it was obvious, from the beginning, that his strength was inadequate. When his handful of an army had acquitted itself with tolerable success in a rough and tumble at Edgehill in the Midlands, when it had occupied Oxford and proceeded to advance down the Thames, storming Brentford on its way, it found the London trained bands in position at Turnham Green, and liked the look of them so little that it retired to Oxford without the formality of a battle. From that moment all real interest had gone out of the struggle; the King could not win, and it was only a question of time and determination how soon he should be rounded up.

And yet, by purely military calculations, he ought to have had a good chance of winning. He had an excellent staff as compared with that of his enemy; its plan for the encirclement of London was soundly conceived, and in those days of open fields he had not only the material for an excellent cavalry, but a born leader of shock tactics in his nephew Prince Rupert. The first Parliamentary army was miserably led, and at Edgehill Rupert and Wilmot had hunted their cavalry like hares. What was lacking to the Royalists was the will to win that enables men to sink their individuality and interests in a common cause. This the decaying Tudor system, with Charles I at its head, could by no means command. The Cavaliers did not fight like men who had staked everything on winning; some of the best of them feared victory little less than defeat. Sir Edmund Verney, the King's standard bearer at Edgehill, said before the battle that he heartily wished the King would yield to the Parliament's terms, but, he added, "I have eaten his bread and served him nigh thirty years, and will not do so base a thing as to forsake him; and choose rather to loose my life—which I am sure to do—to preserve and defend those things which are against my conscience to preserve

and defend." The most attractive of all the characters of this time was the gentle and scholarly Viscount Falkland, who was so horrified at the fractricidal struggle that, to all intents and purposes, he committed suicide at Newbury.

There is, in fact, among the Cavalier ranks, little reasoned consciousness of a cause worth dying for, apart from their personal loyalty to their King and master, and a temperamental dislike of the gloomy Puritans who, they instinctively felt, were taking away from England the colour and merriment that had been hers in the past. It is noticeable that of all the many Cavalier rouses that were being sung in the Halls at Oxford and round the camp fires of Rupert, the most celebrated expressed a sheer yearning for the colour and trappings of life which men associated with a court atmosphere :

" Though for a time we see Whitehall
With cobwebs hanging on the wall,
Instead of silk and silver brave,
Which formerly it used to have ;
With rich perfume
In every room,
Delightful to that princely train,
Which again you shall see,
When the time it shall be,
That the King enjoys his own again."

Sentiment of this kind, however endearing, is not of the sort that impels men to victory in a long struggle. Even in the palmy days of Elizabeth the vice of indiscipline had prevented us from pressing home our success against King Philip, and since Elizabeth's time the upper class had been running to seed. We are not surprised to find that indiscipline was rampant among the followers of Charles I. For this reason he never had an army that could be manoeuvred on the field, and not often one that could be relied on to carry out a strategic plan. His movement on London in 1643 involved the convergence of three armies, but of these the Cornish troops would not march Eastward while the garrison at Plymouth threatened their homes, the Northern army was pinned to its base in the same way by the garrison of Hull, and even the main force at Oxford contained a large proportion of Welshmen who were not willing to march on London before settling accounts with Gloucester. Thus was a promising scheme rendered hopeless.

As it was in strategy, so in tactics. Rupert or Goring might be able to sweep the opposing cavalry from the field, but they were never able to keep their own troopers in hand, and the result of a successful charge was that Cavaliers and Roundheads alike, on one

particular wing, disappeared from the field. At Newbury, when the King's army barred the Roundhead communications with London and had only to sit tight for their army to disperse, the battle was precipitated by the undisciplined offensive of some Royalist officers. At Marston Moor, the great defeat outside York which lost the North to the King, Rupert had the egregious folly to halt and dismount within charging distance of Oliver Cromwell. When the King surrounded Essex at Lostwithiel in Cornwall and compelled the surrender of his infantry, the cavalry broke through the cordon because Lord Goring had been too drunk to take an order. The King's army was never concentrated, but dispersed in useless garrisons of private residences all over the country, providing fine material for romantic fiction but worse than useless for the purpose of winning the war. Gentlemen, plumed and beribboned, came to Oxford for a gallop with Rupert and left it as they pleased. It is a marvel that they kept up the struggle as long as they did.

This, however, was partly due to the fact that, to begin with, their opponents were little more set on victory than themselves. What we have called the Whig party in the contention, that of the great nobles and well-to-do gentlemen, who desired to substitute their own power for that of the King, shrank from pushing matters to an extremity. One or two of them, like Hampden, saw clearly enough that if you are going to war, you must fight to win, but men like Essex and Manchester shrank from putting themselves beyond the scope of mercy should the King, as seemed probable sooner or later, come to enjoy his own again. They clung to the hope of some respectable compromise, if only for the reason that the King seemed a necessary part of the Constitution, and his consent must ultimately be obtained to any arrangement that was come to. Only when the heart of the rebellion was threatened directly by an advance on London or indirectly by the siege of Gloucester, did Essex, the Roundhead commander-in-chief, act as if he really intended to win, and on each of these occasions the situation was saved by the London trained bands, formed largely from that London mob which had been the most effective support of the Long Parliament in terrorizing the King.

One result of the backboneless Roundhead strategy was a number of minor successes to the Royalists, which produced apprehensions of defeat among the Parliamentary leaders and something like war-weariness among their followers. They therefore determined to redress the falling balance by throwing in the weight of the Scots,

who had hitherto held aloof. But it is not in the Scottish nature to give something for nothing, and the price demanded for their alliance was that the larger Kingdom should take the Covenant and conform her religious system to that of the smaller. It did not occur to the Scots that England herself might have something to say to this arrangement, and Parliament was too eager to get the Scottish army, to be particular what it pledged its word to. The bargain was therefore concluded; the Scots came South and turned the balance at Marston Moor, and an assembly of divines met at Westminster, to work out the details of setting up a Presbyterian Kirk in England.

To one man of genius on the Roundhead side, Oliver Cromwell, it had early been apparent that the Whig methods (again to use a title which was only invented later) of waging war could only end in prolonging it indefinitely. He was as impatient of Essex's tactics as Nelson was to be of Lord Howe's. He perceived, moreover, that the kind of man of which the first Parliamentary armies were composed could not compare with the gentlemen and their hard-riding retainers who were pitted against them. So, with an insight that was deeper than that of the professional soldiers, he determined, in his own command, to make the utmost use of the strongest moral force in the country, that of Puritanism. The ideal at which he aimed was an army of devout enthusiasts, men conscious of their salvation and of their divine commission to smite Amelek hip and thigh. Gradually he turned his ideal into practice, and the conspicuous success of his own Ironsides in the field caused this leaven of uncompromising Puritanism gradually to leaven the whole army.

Unlike the first Parliamentary commanders, Cromwell fought to win. It was the merest matter of course for him to declare that if he met the King in action he would treat him as he would any other soldier. These new methods were, however, little to the taste of Parliament. An army of saints might easily get out of hand, and the type of Puritanism favoured by the troops was of a more logical and individualistic, though at the same time more tolerant kind than that of the State-controlled Presbyterian Kirk which the Westminster divines were trying to set up. The strangest opinions were being mooted among them, heretical and democratic, very little to the taste of the staid and aristocratic gentlemen who, in getting the mastery of their King, had no idea of finding that they had raised up for themselves a tyrant more formidable than any Stuart. They fussed and interfered with the army to little purpose. At last matters came to a crisis when, instead of pushing home the victory of Marston,

Essex wandered off into Cornwall and got himself surrounded, and Manchester deliberately wrecked a scheme to cut off the victorious King from Oxford at a second battle of Newbury.

Parliament itself was compelled to recognize facts; the old commanders were dismissed in a body; an army, called the New Model, was formed on the Cromwellian principle, and though its commander-in-chief, Fairfax, was a gentleman more of the old model than the new, he at least had enough strategical sense to aim at seeking out the King's main army and defeating it wherever it could be found. Meanwhile the resources of the Parliament, which commanded the richest part of the Kingdom, were giving it an overwhelming material superiority, while the King's desperate straits for money and the way in which his undisciplined and needy levies contrived to live on the country, were killing his cause in even the most loyal districts. The issue was inevitable; the New Model soon found the King drifting about aimlessly in the Midlands and, outnumbering him two to one, smashed his army to pieces at Naseby. After that it was only a matter of "mopping up" the remaining Royalist forces, who showed little keenness to die in the last ditch. Meanwhile a rehearsal in miniature of the English war was taking place in Scotland, where the poet-hero Montrose was winning a series of glorious but fruitless victories for the King with a scratched-up army of wild Highlanders and Irishmen, against the Presbyterians of the Lowlands and the powerful Campbell clan. The higher civilization soon told, as it was bound to tell, and Montrose, with all his victories behind him, was caught by superior numbers and all but annihilated. Such, in rough outline, was the course of the first civil war.

3

The Triumph of the Saints

The battle of Naseby cleared the way for Puritanism, which was now free to profit as it might by its triumph. Its only possible rival, the Church of England, had gone down with the "Belial of the court", though the King pathetically refused to realize this, as he had refused to realize most other facts with which he had had to deal. What he had lost by arms he might regain by finesse, and he embarked upon a course which was as heroic in its intention as it was futile and cunning in practice. The King was determined, come what might, that he would not sacrifice, as he had sacrificed Strafford, the friends who had fought for him nor the Church he loved. Though,

even when he was brought to face the tribunal which had been got together to compass his death, he hardly realized that they would dare proceed to extremities, no man was ever more proudly disdainful of preserving his own life. He continued his shifts with unabated skill while his fate was inevitably closing around him, and he died, as he was well aware, a martyr for the Church that afterwards canonized him. And by the manner of his death he went far towards retrieving the mistakes of his life.

In the contest that had started at Edgehill between King and Parliament, both sides had signally failed. The victory was nominally with the Parliament, but the power was with the army they had raised up for their own protection. So long as the New Model was in being, there was no force in the country capable of standing against it, and the Parliament, as blind to facts as the King himself, not only did all it could to irritate the troops by its Presbyterian tyranny, but, by its ignoble meanness in trying to disband the army without paying off arrears, precipitated a crisis. The men refused to be disbanded and marched on London, where they soon found themselves masters of the situation. It was now only a question on what terms the New Model would tolerate the civilians at Westminster, and how long they would tolerate their power on any terms. Events were soon to happen that brought the soldiers more than ever to the fore. The Scottish Presbyterians, who had flattered themselves that they could impose their will on the larger Kingdom as the price of their support, found out that Parliament was perfectly impotent to carry out this or any other bargain against the will of the army. Disillusioned, they tried to make much the same bargain on much the same terms, this time with the Royalists. They were too late; there was nothing in the three kingdoms that could stand up against the New Model.

A second Civil war broke out; smouldering embers of Royalism burst into flame; a considerable but ill-led and half-hearted Scottish army straggled into Lancashire along what is now the line of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway, and Cromwell, crossing the Pennines from Yorkshire, cut them in half by one of those overwhelming triumphs of strategy which, like Sedan and Tannenberg, are only possible where the material or moral superiority of the victor is decisive. It was the merest police work to stamp out the revolt in England, though the temper of the Roundheads had perceptibly hardened against the "malignants", and cold blood was now being required for hot. It was not likely that the King, who was held to be the prime mover of all this mischief, would escape.

Parliament, which never contemplated so shocking a breach with tradition as public regicide, went on with the game of negotiation till the army took the matter and the King out of their hands. Parliament was easily brought to heel by a Colonel and a force of soldiers who turned out the whole Conservative and Presbyterian majority, and left the remainder, or Rump, free to go through the legal farce of putting the King out of the way. What was left of the House of Lords dropped, for a time, out of the Constitution, and the Rump itself only survived until Cromwell, losing all patience with its politicians, sent them packing the way their Presbyterian colleagues had gone before them, and " not a dog barked at their going ". To such an ignoble end had the Long Parliament come.

By this time the New Model had established such a lordship over the British Isles as no King had ever enjoyed. The massacre of Protestants in Ireland was now terribly revenged. Ireland was laid, crushed and bleeding, at the feet of a conqueror who knew not mercy to Catholics and " wild Irish ". Not without reason is the curse of Cromwell esteemed the most terrible an Irishman can utter. " Say your rann now, little man," had been the cry of an iron gospeller as he pushed one of the last Irish bards over a cliff. The Irish cause had failed, partly because of the tragic Irish incapacity for united action, but most of all owing to the irresistible strength of the New Model. Crownwell and his saints were conquerors of a higher character than the old Normans and Elizabethans. If their God was a pitiless Hebrew Jehovah, they at least lived as if in His sight; indiscriminate looting was put down with as severe a hand as Wellington's; the abominations practised on Irishwomen in 1798 would have seemed to them, as indeed they were, hellish and damnable. They proceeded with the merciless logic and spiritual pride of God's chosen hewing down Amelek. The laws of war were executed with all the merciless severity characteristic of " the cruel wars of High Germanie "; garrisons were put to the sword, fugitives were smoked to death in caves, and the lesson taught by Mountjoy of starving the population into surrender by devastating the country was only too faithfully learnt by the Ironsides.

Slaughter and starvation were followed by a robbery of Irish land more systematic and extensive than any before. " To Hell or Connaught " was Cromwell's summary of his policy towards the inhabitants. It was the deliberate intention of the conquerors to solve the Irish problem by transporting the natives of three quarters of the Island, bag and baggage, to the province, on which Strafford

had cast greedy eyes, West of the Shannon. Their lands were to be given to retired soldiers or to speculators who bought them up at a fraction of their value. The usual precautions were taken against any reconciliation, by intermarriage, between the two nations, precautions happily futile. Of course, the idea of turning out the whole population was as impracticable as it was wicked; the spoilers needed their services in the mournful task of tilling the dispossessed lands, and the Restoration cut short the full execution of the Commonwealth policy. But the miseries inflicted on the Catholic landowners and their families, who were cast penniless on a province where there was no room for them, were pitiful, and another blow, perhaps the heaviest of all, was inflicted on the ancient Irish civilization. The Irishman's Church was now becoming all that was left to him, and he clung to it with a passionate and patriotic devotion.

The condition of Ireland was indeed forlorn. Her harp was silent in the dust; her once flourishing commerce was almost killed. "Poor Galway," writes a clergyman,[1] "sitteth in the dust and no eye pitieth her. Her merchants were princes and great among the nations, but now the city which was full of people is solitary and very desolate." To make assurance of ruin doubly sure, the Irish inhabitants were ordered to clear out of their once opulent seaport, in order to make way for adventurers from Gloucester. Poor Galway! Her case was typical. Englishmen thought not of the woes of Ireland, but of massacres, that lost nothing in the telling, of Protestants, and of the fact that God's slaughtered saints, the Protestants of Piedmont, were being put to the sword by Irish Catholic mercenaries. For by some strange fate, it seems as if the two sister nations must have eyes for, and experience only of what is evil one in the other.

We may take what comfort we can from the reflection that even in those hard days there were one or two Englishmen more enlightened than the majority towards their Irish brethren. Good Bishop Bedell, who died of his privations during the rebellion of 1642, had embodied the peculiar sweetness that distinguished the best sons of the Anglican Church. He had the rare distinction of acting like a Christian towards those who differed from him in their Christianity. He endeavoured to stand between the Catholics and the injustice of English law; he did all he could to encourage the study of the Irish language among his clergy, and some at least of the Irish loved him and gave him protection, though he was deprived of home, goods and library and, indirectly, of life when he refused to leave his

[1] Quoted in Mr. Bagwell's *Ireland under the Stuarts*.

flock in the time of trouble. Then there is an almost forgotten friend of Ireland in the shape of Vincent Gookin, whose father was indeed noted for his virulence against the Irish, but who, himself, incurred the odium of being a corrupted and degenerate Englishman because he took a brave stand against the injustice and impolicy of " Hell or Connaught ". Charity, that would dwell rather on good than evil, will not suffer such names to die when the tale of England in Ireland is told. On the like of such " corrupted Englishmen " reposes England's true greatness in the past and her fairest hope for the future.

Two Cromwellian victories sufficed to make the first complete English conquest of Scotland. So blind to reality were the Lowland Presbyterians, that they had not yet abandoned hope of imposing their Covenant on England with the young Charles II as puppet King, and with infatuated bigotry they weeded their army of its best elements and furnished it with a corps of holy but incompetent officers. Even so Cromwell, advancing by the Eastern gate, found himself pressed as never before; the tough old soldier David Leslie fairly outmanoeuvred him and forced him to the imminent risk of destruction during his retreat between the hills and the sea. It was only the magnificent discipline of the New Model that enabled the whole army to execute a sudden right wheel during a September night and, attacking at dawn, roll up the Scottish army from flank to flank. It was now a forlorn hope to reform the King's service by admitting anyone who would fight for him, however ungodly. Cromwell, again baffled in his advance, this time deliberately left the Western road open, and his enemy, blindly accepting the gambit, started on a mad dash into England, and was soon rounded up and destroyed at Worcester. The civil war was definitely over, and the victorious army able to impose its will upon the British Isles beyond the hope of appeal.

4

The Book

The verdict of arms was thus decisive in favour of the Puritan ideal. The Elizabethan State Church, with its centralized, despotic organization, had proved itself incapable of commanding the allegiance of the strongest and most civilized part of the nation. England, or that part of it which counted most, had determined that there should be no half-way house between Rome and Geneva; the

Reformation was at last to be realized in all its fullness. Every barrier between God and man was to be broken down; salvation was to become direct and immediate; the humblest of God's people had a right to a glorious liberty and a peace passing all understanding. Rome had held the people in mental and spiritual slavery, and now all bonds of human authority were to be broken. "Thou wilt be as one," says Baxter, "that standeth on the top of an exceeding high mountain, he looks down on the world as if it were quite below him . . . the greatest princes will seem to thee but as grasshoppers and the busy, contentious, covetous world, but as an heap of ants."

Few, however, even of the most extreme Protestants were prepared to accept the logical consequences of Protestantism. Those who professed to abhor any half-way house had usually their own halting place beyond which they would neither go themselves, nor suffer others to go. The mitre might be swept away after the tiara, the stained-glass window share the fate of the rood, fathers and councils be respected no more than schoolmen, but the holy book and the holy day would be the objects of a veneration as blind as had ever been inspired by papal and priestly authority. The cell doors had been opened, but the prison gates were still locked.

Luther, in his famous defiance at Worms, had abjured the authority of Popes and General Councils only to affirm that of Scripture, and this collection of the classics of a remote time and an Oriental people became the bedrock of authority upon which the Puritan established his faith. The strangeness of the phenomenon is only obscured by centuries of familiarity. A holy or infallible book is certainly a religious property of most peoples civilized enough to write. But there has been nothing of the same kind as the Christian Bible. The Indian Vedas are a collection of ancestral psalms, whose interpretation is as jealously guarded by the Brahmin caste as ever that of the Bible was by the Catholic priesthood; the Koran is one book, written by an Arab prophet for members of his own race; the Confucian classics are a collection of native literature; and Buddhism, which, transplanted from the land of its origin, presents the closest parallel, has indeed a New Testament, but not an Old.

The Hebrew Classics, which have been given to the English nation in the most magnificent of all translations, are distinguished most by their astonishing diversity. Even the most sceptical of critics must admit that centuries went to their making, and we now know how different are the standpoints of the authors. And yet,

for all this diversity, the Bible has something of the unity of a Gothic Cathedral, the product of many minds and periods, and yet made one by something more profound than any one architect's genius. The simple believer, who talks of "the Book", is using no misnomer. The unity is one not of opinion but of growth, and a growth interrupted by one enormous gap between the two Testaments; it shows how the narrow and barbaric faith of obscure nomads expanded into a Gospel of universal brotherhood, embracing the whole of mankind. It is a record suddenly and even startlingly arrested in the most interesting phase of the story.

This strange and seemingly unnatural conclusion has attracted the attention of a modern author who, if he realized its cause, would scarcely be so cheerful about his scheme of sharking together another and up-to-date Bible. For the Bible significantly stops just where the growth it records expands beyond the confines of the Hebrew race. Suppose that the works of the Fathers had been added to the Bible, and to these the works of the Schoolmen, and the principal chroniclers and Reformers and poets and philosophers who have contributed to advance or record the growth of Christianity, it is doubtful whether any lorry would serve the purpose now fulfilled by an ordinary breast pocket, that of carrying about the Bible. The fact is that the Hebrew race, with its wonderful gift of compression, is the only one that could conceivably have produced a rich and diverse literature, second to none, and capable of going into a pocket edition. Whatever we may think of the truth or morality of the Bible, justice as well as research must own it to be unique and unrivalled at least in its formal suitability to serve as a book of all books.

It has been necessary to make this digression because the Bible is, in sober fact, one of the most important of all constituents of English history, and because, at the height of the Puritan ascendancy, we have the extraordinary spectacle of a whole nation joined together in an almost unquestioning allegiance to the very letter of authors about whose environment and mode of life they knew next to nothing, and whom they therefore imagined as being not very different from themselves. Before the Reformation, this had not mattered so much, because the interpretation of the Bible was in the hands of the Church which had built upon it such an enormous superstructure of doctrine, that the actual word counted for comparatively little—the book was, in fact, deliberately kept out of the hands of the laity. But the theory of the Reformation was that the Bible was not the product of Paul and Ezekiel and Obadiah and the rest, but that the real

author was God Himself, and that these others were only His copyists for whose accuracy of rendering He made Himself responsible—how far this guarantee covered all subsequent translations was a matter of some debate, but the plain believer's ordinary impression was that the book he happened to possess was not only divine in every word and letter, but even a sort of talisman in itself. Therefore, since every saved man (and this category of course was held to cover the first personal pronoun) had the right of unimpeded access to God, he had also the right to possess and form his own conclusions about God's book. The result was to let loose a wholly uninstructed multitude who rushed to their own conclusions about that concerning which the most finished modern scholarship is fain to suspend judgment.

Only such a book could have sustained such an ordeal. The magnificent directness and sincerity of the Hebrew prophet or chronicler enabled him to speak across the ages to any British tinker or pikeman, and to impart at least what was most essential in his message. It also enabled him to impart much that was dark and cruel. The Hebrews had owed the intensity of their spiritual discipline to the fact that they were a little people with open frontiers, wedged in between vast and aggressive Empires; their land was the cockpit of the East, and only by developing a higher type of religion than any around them, and clinging to it with a fanatical yet minutely regulated devotion, were they enabled to accomplish the miracle of surviving, and to plant the seeds of so intense a national feeling that not even dispersion all over the world sufficed to quench it. But people struggling for their life against adversaries so much stronger than themselves, almost inevitably develop the qualities of unscrupulous cunning in contention and merciless ferocity in victory. The Hebrews were no exception. Their heroes were frequently sublime but seldom lovable figures. Even David, who was capable, on occasion, of chivalrous generosity, was guilty of such calculated and sneaking ingratitude to his loyal supporters as might have got him cut in Dante's lowest circle. And perhaps nobody but a Hebrew could have taken much pride in being of the seed of Jacob.

The malignant venom with which the oppressed Hebrew regarded the proud, military nations around him, and which we can so easily understand when we remember his desperate position, was, by the devout Protestant, fathered on to God Himself. It was God Who sanctioned the dashing of little children against the stones,

Who promoted the stoning of him who picked up sticks on the Sabbath; it was His mercy, which endureth for ever, that enabled His chosen to exterminate, without distinction of age or sex, the inoffensive inhabitants of a land they happened to covet; it was to save His dignity and not Elisha's that the two bears were provided with their Gargantuan banquet of forty-two cheeky children. Such seeds seldom fall on stony soil. When an appeal to the baser passions is made in God's name, men became strangely pious. Many were the hearts hardened against compassion, many the consciences stilled by some appropriate text of Scripture. A helpless, tortured old grandmother might wring pity from the toughest heart but—" thou shalt not suffer a witch to live ". A Puritan colonel might have a human impulse to let off some poor Irish priest, until he remembered the sin of Saul. When the Germans invaded Belgium, at least one worthy Herr Pastor pointed out, with perfect truth, that King Albert was taking up exactly the same position as the unfortunate Sehon, King of the Amorites, and that the Kaiser, if he exterminated him and all his people, would be faithfully following the precedent of Moses, the man of God.

It is a not altogether strange, though lamentable fact, that the Puritans, in general, were more inclined towards the Old Testament than the New. As the sun pierced the mists clinging to the low-lying lands about Dunbar, and Cromwell perceived how perfectly his manoeuvre had succeeded, he cried in exultation, " Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered . . . like as the smoke vanisheth so shalt thou drive them away! " Nothing was further from his mind than that this God had commanded him not to resist evil, and had also commanded him to love his neighbour, including Malignants and Scottish Covenanters, equally with himself. " T'were to consider too curiously, to consider so."

The reason is obvious. The Puritan knew, deep in his sub-conscious mind, for what purpose he wanted his Bible. We have seen how the Calvinist doctrine had arisen, how it was not in the nature of a theory but of a weapon. The Puritan was not speculating, in academic calm, about the nature of the universe, but fighting for his cause against principalities and against powers, and he naturally wanted that cause to be a fighting cause. The teaching of Christ, Who perplexed and discouraged His followers by refusing to take a patriotic line against the Romans, Who forbade His servants to fight and scorned to contend, with their own weapons, against forces of this world, was as little suited to the needs of sea-beggars and

ironsides as it had been to those of the early Caesars. "Blessed are the merciful" would have been a poor text for the stormers of Drogheda; it was hardly through its meekness that the New Model came to inherit the mastery of Great Britain and Ireland, and "poor in spirit" is the last epithet that we should apply to John Milton. Combatants in the wars of religion that were desolating Europe, and by which the fate of the Reformation was being decided, may all have been fighting in Christ's name, but the less they had to do with His teaching the better for their success.

On the other hand, the fierce and exclusive patriotism engendered by the struggle against the heathen made the Old Testament, or a great part of it, an ideal *vade mecum* for members of those small Protestant congregations that sprang up, as if from the soil, and that neither the fires of Rome nor the severities of Laud availed to destroy. For all his theories of literal inspiration, the Calvinist was a practical adept in selecting and valuing his texts. By far the most important portion of Scripture for him was the Book of Psalms, which is largely an anthology of incomparably magnificent war poems. The Jehovah in Whom such limitless trust is confided is frankly a partisan, the God of Israel, a very present help in trouble, the unseen leader of the host and watchman over the city, Whose mercy smites nations and slays Kings, Who causes the orphan children of the adversary to wander begging their bread and allows none to have pity on them. That is one side of the picture, the other is a limitless and touching confidence that pants after Jehovah as a hart for the water-brooks, that walks through the Valley of the Shadow fearless beneath His protection, and prizes His love more than that of father or mother. For the average Puritan the Psalms are the centre or citadel of his belief. His very salvation is but a development of this intense self-surrender to a Higher Power.

There is another feature of the Old Testament that renders it peculiarly appropriate to the needs of the struggling little theocratic congregations which took their inspiration from Geneva. Of all the peoples of the ancient East the Hebrews were the most democratic at heart. Theirs was certainly not a democracy broadening down from precedent to precedent, or based upon any abstract theory of the rights of man. Largely it was due to the accident of the Kingship having been forced upon a hitherto all-powerful priestly theocracy by urgent political necessity. Samuel, it is evident, from a narrative written from the priestly standpoint, had had to make a virtue of a supremely disagreeable necessity in consenting to crown Saul,

but he never ceased to do all in his power to make the King's position impossible. The task of a King of Israel or Judah was obviously no easy one, with the priesthood as a permanent if unavowed opposition, and a constant succession of prophets, men of inviolable sanctity in the eyes of the people, ready to denounce any royal shortcomings with a grandeur of invective unsurpassed in history. Small wonder that, under these circumstances, royalty at last disappeared and the priests remained in possession of the field.

Where Kings and priests fall out, the people come by their own. The prophets, ascetics often of humble origin, and to whom any stick must often have been good enough to beat a King with, displayed a noble enthusiasm in championing the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Jehovah was naturally enlisted in the good cause. " The Lord," says one of the Psalms, " executeth righteousness and judgment upon all them that are oppressed with wrong." The classic instance of Kingly injustice is that of Naboth's vineyard, and it was one peculiarly calculated to appeal to the English mind, with its respect for individual rights. Dogs, so the devout opponents of arbitrary government would not fail to remember, had licked the blood of Ahab and made a complete meal of Jezebel. Nor would it be forgotten how Nathan had bearded the meanest of all murderers with the piteous story of the rich man and the ewe lamb. It was not only against Kings that the wrath of the prophets was directed. Rich men who laid house to house and field to field (a practice of which England had had bitter experience), the unjust judge, the oppressor of the fatherless and widow, all were the objects of these terrific and shattering denunciations. The Hebrews were never suffered to forget how they had been in bondage to the Egyptians and how the Lord had delivered them, as He could always be trusted to rescue the weak out of the hands of the strong, whatever the odds. No more perfect armoury could be imagined than that of the Old Testament to provide God's poor saints with weapons against tyranny. When Charles I was going to the City after the failure of his attempt upon the five members, somebody thrust into his coach a paper on which was inscribed that terrible cry which had split asunder the inheritance of David—" To your tents, O Israel ! "

5

The Elect of God

Such was the Old Testament to the Puritan, who tacitly assumed that he stood in the place of the Israelite, one of God's chosen people,

waging merciless warfare against God's and his own enemies, and that he had on his side the righteousness and justice with which he invested God's character. But, whatever the importance he attached to this formidable fighting creed, it was in consciousness of the fact that he was not only, in the spiritual sense, an Israelite, but also a Christian, saved by the Blood of his Redeemer. This assurance of salvation was the most vital of all factors in his belief, and it is essential to know exactly what it implied to him.

The Christianity to which the Puritan subscribed was derived less from Christ than from Paul of Tarsus. It is, indeed, remarkable to how small an extent the personality of the Son of Man, as portrayed in the Gospels, figures in the teaching either of Rome, where His figure is almost overshadowed by that of His mother, or of the revolt against Rome, where He becomes less of a person than a symbol of the soul's reconciliation with her Maker. Paul, who had never been acquainted with Christ, and had perhaps never seen Him except in a vision, found, not in His humanity but His godhead, an escape from the formal bondage of the Mosaic discipline. He thirsted, like all mystics, for a more vivid, a more intimate spiritual experience, and this experience he called Christ. "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Luther, wearied with a fruitless asceticism and revolted by the spiritless formalism of Renaissance Rome, found himself in exactly the same predicament, and it is only natural that he should have instinctively recognized a kindred spirit in his great predecessor. Calvinism pushed the Pauline theory to a length of which Paul himself would never have dreamed. To live was now either Christ or Satan, and it was entirely beyond anybody's power to determine what his luck would be, in this world or the next. To say that Christ had died for everybody was in itself a damnable heresy, that of Arminius and Laud. He had done nothing of the sort. The Creator of the Universe cherished so implacable a grudge against all His creatures, on account of Eve's having eaten forbidden fruit, that His original intention was to have tortured them eternally without exception, but owing to the sacrifice of His innocent Son, He would allow a certain number, predestined by Himself for inscrutable reasons, to be admitted to grace.

How were these favoured individuals to be known? The problem was a difficult one, but its solution was helped out by a convenient confusion of cause with effect. No amount of personal effort could make the least difference, but the effect of grace would certainly be seen in holiness of life and an indwelling assurance of salvation.

Whosoever, therefore, wanted to feel himself saved would, naturally, if not very logically, set himself to manufacture the symptoms. He would cultivate holiness and inward conviction, and if he were a person of normally healthy mind he would soon find the wish father to the state he wanted to attain, though were he of a hypochondriac disposition he might, like Cowper and the youthful Bunyan, be haunted by constant fears of being damned.

This new discovery of salvation was a fact of the first historical importance. The religious treatises of the time vie with one another in endeavouring to express the rapture of the soul set free. "As I was sitting by the fire," says Bunyan, "I suddenly felt this word to sound in my heart, I must go to Jesus. At this my former darkness and atheism fled away, and the blessed things of Heaven were set in my view . . . I could scarce lie in my bed for joy and peace and triumph through Christ." But the experience of conversion had more than an individual interest. It was felt that God was at this time mightily visiting His people, that He had it in mind to establish a community of saints, God's elect who should possess this world as well as the next. And for this purpose, it was thought by Englishmen that special choice had been made of England. "God," says Milton, "is beginning some new and great period of His Church, even to the reforming of reformation itself, and what should He do but reveal it, as His manner is, first to us Englishmen?" and Milton's vision of a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, is familiar to everyone. Every war waged by such a people was a holy war, all their enemies were the enemies of God, a thing that Cromwell had no hesitation in assuming even when these enemies happened to be Presbyterians of the most holy strictness, and when the very manoeuvre which had exposed them to destruction had been dictated not by their general but their preachers.

An intense pre-occupation with the soul and its affairs had the effect of deepening and quickening the national consciousness. The gorgeous pageantry of Elizabethan literature had gone by, but the still waters of the soul, below the reach of storms, were as yet unplumbed. Vastly inferior as Milton may have been to Shakespeare in scope and humanity, he had command of a sublimity of which the elder poet had no apparent conception. Such a character as Lucifer or even Samson Agonistes was entirely out of Shakespeare's range; it is impossible to imagine a saintly character stepping on to the boards in one of his plays. When Milton wrote of "sweetest

Shakespeare, fancy's child " warbling his native woodnotes, he was, perhaps subconsciously, expressing a criticism, though one exaggerated and incomplete. Shakespeare had not only fancy, but an ardent and penetrating imagination; he was perhaps unique among the Elizabethans in insisting on the supreme importance of personality, of truth to oneself. But even with him—and how much more with his contemporaries !—the main interest centres in external happenings and not spiritual development. In *Samson Agonistes* it is in the dauntless spirit of a hero purified by suffering and rising triumphantly above captivity and blindness, just as in the Book of Job the raiding Bedouins, the plague, and those two great winds, one of which overwhelmed the feasting sons and out of the other of which God's voice was heard thundering a series of overwhelming questions, are but a shadowy background to the tremendous spiritual drama.

This is not so in Shakespeare. Henry V is a hero and we are allowed to trace his development, but his is not a spiritual triumph; it is enough that he wins a great battle and marries a princess with a Kingdom for her dowry. The spiritual interest is secondary. Even in Hamlet, the interest is centred round a murder which has to be first brought home to the criminal and then avenged. In the greatest modern drama, in Ibsen, for example, or Pirandello, some spiritual problem has to be solved; in Shakespeare something practical has got to be done. To take another contrast, that of Spenser's moral allegory with Bunyan's, it is the weakness of Spenser that we are most often allowed to forget the allegory in the same way that, in Malory, we forget the war with Rome and even Arthur himself in an endless series of romantic adventures. In Bunyan, the tale of the pilgrimage is held up by long and inappropriate disquisitions in theology, so great is the author's eagerness to concentrate on the purely spiritual issue, even to the neglect of so splendid a story as that of Christian. Or finally, contrast Marlowe's rowdy and business-like Mephistopheles with the sombre yet shining figure of Milton's fallen Archangel.

It is an exaggerated but an illuminating way of putting it to say that the Puritans made the discovery of the soul. The Elizabethans were what William James would have called " once born ", they were content to fling themselves into the loveliness and adventure of life with the innocence of children, taking their own selves more or less for granted. Their very sadness was a luxury :

" Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy."

The eye that turns inwards and surveys what lies there with dismay

at its insufficiency, that which we know as "conviction of Sin", was scarcely opened. And yet in every church throughout the Kingdom were already repeated such passionate outcries as, "we do earnestly repent and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings, the remembrance of them is grievous to us, the burden of them is intolerable." These were the first-fruits of Protestantism, but the harvest was not to be garnered until the ruling party of the nation, from the Protector downwards, was, like Bunyan's man in rags, breaking forth into that lamentable cry of "what shall I do?"

The healthy soul of the Elizabethans had become sick—that is one way of expressing it—or, to bring out the Puritan case, the imperfect soul had at last begun to realize its need of perfection. For the logic of facts had turned, both politically and spiritually, against the Elizabethan order of things. We have already traced the process of its decay and collapse. Once the strong discipline of national peril was removed it became

> "an unweeded garden
> That runs to seed, things rank and gross in nature
> Possess it",

things like the decadent court drama and men like Buckingham and Goring. Lacking as it was in introspection, it was without a strong internal discipline, it followed blindly in the lead of the old Adam, the natural man, into the Wood of Error or the City of Destruction.

The much-needed discipline the Puritans could and did supply. They had a crude and one-sided psychology; their methods were often as superstitious as those of the alchemists, and as wasteful as those of the legendary Chinaman who burned down his house in order to provide himself with roast pork, but they were the best solution of the spiritual problem that the time had to offer; they did pull the nation together and imparted an earnestness and concentration to the English character that it has never wholly lost. Human nature, they saw, was a thing that could and ought to be improved. To recognize this was the first step towards perfection, and was called "conviction of sin". In their rough and exaggerated way, the Puritans wanted to blackguard and defame poor Nature as something odious, damnable, hateful to God. They had no conception of a gradual improvement, of making the best of their human material by patient and rational means; they thought in terms of their Calvinist theology which knew only black and white, the goats and the sheep. The improved man was for Heaven,

the natural man for its Antipodes; even the gates of Purgatory were banged, barred, and bolted. In theory men were improved, or rather saved, by grace, which was a simple but very powerful form of suggestion. In practice this was reinforced by a minute and relentless discipline, which aimed, not at reforming the unfortunate natural man, but destroying him altogether.

The old Adam had neglected his duty in order to follow his natural impulses—greedy lusts the Puritans called them—towards pleasure and colour and sex. Therefore, according to these crude and violent doctors of the mind, all these things were offences, and must be cut out and cast away according to the Scriptures. The end in view was a good one, to secure concentration upon one main object by eliminating everything irrelevant; the means of attaining it were as costly and ill-adjusted as those of the old cupping and bleeding surgeons. To restrain the Elizabethan licence, to make England godly, the Elizabethan joy of life, its pageantry and colour and song, all that constituted Merrie England, were ruthlessly and without necessity sacrificed.

There was, for all its virtues, inherent in Puritanism one dark and besetting sin, that threatened to bring the whole of its work toppling in ruin about its ears. The assurance of salvation, which every Puritan desired and which sooner or later most of them attained, brought with it a hard and humourless pride, from which the noblest minds, Milton's, Cromwell's, George Fox's, were not exempt. It is one thing to hunger and thirst after improving one's inner man, it is another thing to suggest to oneself that the inner man is, by Christ's grace, already improved out of recognition. It is a fearful thing for a man to place himself on a pedestal above his fellows. The Milton who deliberately sacrificed his eyesight to his duty, who penned that burning and piteous appeal for God's slaughtered saints in Piedmont, was the Milton who could scold like an interminable fishwife against obscure hacks of controversy, the domestic tyrant of whom one of his sorely tried daughters said, not without some sneaking sympathy from average posterity, that it was no news to hear of his wedding, but if she could hear of his death, that was something. And it would take a Carlyle to read without disgust the dispatch written about the Massacre of Drogheda, by the hero the underlying simplicity and grandeur of whose nature he has forever vindicated—Oliver Cromwell.

Such was the Puritan system, a rough and ready discipline based upon a by no means scientific psychology, but one of the most

powerful engines ever devised for changing and concentrating the spirit of a nation. To its upholders, at least, there was no doubt of its efficacy. It was a time of boundless hope. England herself was about to put off the old Adam, to cast off the filthy garments of her sinful past and to become something altogether different and holy. The Fifth Monarchy men were only giving definite voice to the general aspiration when they announced that the Empires of this world were over, and that the final and glorious Empire, that of Christ and His saints on earth, was about to commence.

6

Spiritual Bolshevism

It is this determination to make all things new, this general expectancy of a sudden and millennial change, that gives its most distinctive character to the period between the summoning of the Long Parliament and the Restoration. Men's minds were cast loose from their moorings, and the most revolutionary theories were calmly discussed in politics and religion. A spirit was abroad of getting saved quick, individually and collectively. The result was that the bewildered nation was rife with experiments and theories, sometimes in striking anticipation of subsequent developments, but which it would require centuries of preparation for her to assimilate. The Puritan regime was thus like a gigantic forcing house, and the more daring grew the enthusiasts, the more did the general body of the nation first distrust and then re-act passionately against the pace at which the Millennium was being pushed forward.

It must have a sobering effect on ardent reformers, who imagine that in a few days or years they can remould the world to their hearts' desire, to follow to their close this and other periods of sweeping change. For mankind has its own gait, and though by tact its step may be quickened, it will not tolerate hustling. However good an idea may be, it must have time to sink in or, like Puritanism, its action will be followed by an equal and opposite reaction, unless, like Christianity reconciled to Caesar, it turns into its exact opposite. But this in itself is a view partial and incomplete:

> "Perchance because we see not to the close."

Reaction is only the sequel, it is not the end of revolution. What was best in Puritanism was not blown away by the wind from Flanders—it is with us now, and the French Revolution has survived the Metternich system. No man can garner the fruit of his actions

on this side of eternity. We sow of our best, with our blood and tears we water the soil, and then take our wages and go home. It is better than dreaming idle in the market-place.

We shall make no pretence at a detailed examination of all the multifarious attempts to realize the Puritan ideal. Many of the most important sects of that time are with us still, sobered down to a routine of respectability in marked contrast with the ardours of their birth. Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers, even the Muggletonians, survive and play a not inconsiderable part in our social system. But they are no longer in the van of progress, and if anything is likely to be cut off as a result of their activities, it is the beer of the subjects and not the head of the Sovereign. The true heirs of Puritanism to-day are those who deny the authority not only of Popes and Bishops, but of Bibles and codes of morality and the assumptions on which religious and social dogma is based.

In this time of anarchic spiritual ferment, few were the modern doctrines that were not, in however crude a form, anticipated by those who, having broken loose from the restraints of authority, sought to realize the full liberty of the spirit. Ever since the beginning of the Reformation there had been a left wing of those whom we may best style Protestant Bolsheviks. The Anabaptists, by the extravagant licence to which they pushed their newly-acquired liberty, were, on the Continent, the scandal of the Reformers, and obtained scant mercy. Some of these had appeared in England, as early as the reign of Henry VIII, often men of the highest principles and character. They were regarded in the light of a dangerous nuisance, and even kindly old Latimer, not to speak of Cranmer and Ridley, had no hesitation in sending them to the very martyrdom they were to undergo themselves.

Since that time, the connection between England and the Continent, and particularly Holland, ensured that the extreme forms of Protestantism should from time to time make their appearance here. Anabaptism became established, in a diluted and Bowdlerized form, in the two sects of English Baptists, general and particular. The Family of Love, a quiet and gentle sect, founded by one Henry Niklaes, a Westphalian, made its appearance in England under the name of the Familists. But what is most characteristic of the state of mind at the time of the Great Rebellion is the movement—for it is too indefinite to call a sect—of the Seekers. Honour is due to these obscure and probably illiterate men for taking up an attitude

almost unique in the history of human beliefs. For they did not profess to have attained the truth; they did not even, like so many modern agnostics, profess to know that the unknown is unknowable. They were frankly expectant, and it is a memorable picture that William Penn draws of their meetings. They "waited together", he says, "in silence, and as anything rose in any one of their minds that they thought savoured of a divine spring, so they sometimes spoke." No better evidence could be afforded of the extraordinary state of spiritual instability prevailing at this time.

Though we can only speak with extreme generality of the movements in this kaleidoscope of sects, not always either organized or clearly defined, we can say, roughly, that the Seeker movement takes two main directions, one comparatively moderate, and one extreme. On the moderate side, the Seekers are intimately connected with the growth of the Quakers, perhaps the most remarkable of all religious products of this time, whose spiritual energy was great enough to carry them across the Atlantic, and whose missionaries penetrated all over Christendom, and even to Constantinople. The founder of this sect, George Fox, is one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest of all English mystics, and forms the central figure in the second period of mystical quickening in our history, the time of Rolle and Hylton being the first. The works of the German shoemaker and seer, Jacob Boehme, were first translated into English in 1644; his influence is marked by traces of a small and obscure sect of Behmenites.

The Quaker movement represents a passionate attempt to get back from Christianity to Christ, even to the adoption of that doctrine of non-resistance which most Christians have tacitly agreed to ignore as impracticable. But the Quakers were not prepared to go the whole way in their quest for the pure spirit. One of their early leaders, James Nayler, did, indeed, ride into Bristol on an ass, in imitation of the Christ whose spirit he believed to dwell within him, and gave a Puritan Parliament a fine opportunity of showing what it meant by Christianity, not to speak of its own gross violation of the law, by having him whipped, pilloried, and bored through the tongue with a hot iron. But Nayler was, at the time of his offence, at open variance with Fox and had no support from the Quakers of Bristol, and he afterwards, in what Charles Lamb describes as "a strain of the beautifullest humility", made acknowledgment of his error. The Quakers stood for getting, at all costs, at the real sense of scripture, but, despite the statements of their enemies to

the contrary, they took their stand upon its divine inspiration, even to the point of pedantry.

Not so the Ranters, who may be described as the left wing of the Seeker movement, and who were, to all intents and purposes, anarchists. Nothing would satisfy them but the indwelling spirit; and in their quest for this they succeeded in blundering upon extraordinary anticipations of modern rationalism. Mr. Rufus Jones, who, in his *Studies of Mystical Religion*, has collected much valuable information about the vagaries of this time, cites a passage from the *Carol of the Ranters* that would delight a Hyde Park atheist:—

> "They prate of God! Believe it, fellow creatures,
> There's no such bugbear: all was made by Nature.
> We know all came of nothing, and shall pass
> Into the same condition once it was
>
> By Nature's power, and that they grossly lie
> Who say there's hope of immortality,
> Let them but tell us what a soul is; then
> We shall adhere to these mad, brainsick men."

Even more striking, because less crude, is the idea, noted in Edwards's *Gangraena*, as one of many prevalent errors, that "we did look for great matters from one crucified at Jerusalem sixteen-hundred years ago; but that does no good, it must be a Christ formed in us—the Deity united to our humanity", a not unplausible interpretation of the words "The Kingdom of God is within you".

The Ranters themselves, though the term is a vague one and was probably applied to any pious-speaking libertine or extremist who could not be otherwise classified, got, as Mr. Jones truly says, "a bad name from everybody." Poor, uneducated men as most of them were, it was too much to expect them to know how to make wise use of a liberty that absolved them not only from laws but from the conventions of morality. And yet may it not be said that of all the sects and Churches of seventeenth century England, the Ranters have come closest to anticipating the spirit of the twentieth?

7

The Cause of the People

There is no period in our history during which military and political events, however startling, have so little importance relatively to the changes that were taking place in the world of thought, as that of the Puritan Revolution. Viewed as a political experiment, the Commonwealth must be pronounced a failure. In spite of Naseby

and Worcester, the Puritans, though never defeated, lost the war more hopelessly than if Rupert had accepted the challenge of Turnham Green and the King had come back to his own at the very beginning. Oliver Cromwell, when he turned the Rump Parliament out of doors, had, in fact, set himself a task of absolute impossibility, that of setting up a lawful government in the teeth of the law and, what was bound to follow, of the nation's consent to be governed. By an inevitable process, he was forced more and more to rely upon the naked sword. This might answer so long as his mighty personality remained to hold the New Model and the realm together, though the strain of it wore even him into the grave. And once his body entered its precarious lodging in the Abbey it was hardly more than a question of months how long the unnatural edifice he had supported would take in falling to pieces.

Cromwell's character has baffled criticism by its very simplicity. He was, like so many of those who have impressed men with being endowed with superhuman powers, whether for good or evil, the very incarnation of will-power. Every considerable impression he received set up an impulse to violent action, which he might hold in check, as a strong man presses down a spring, until it could be held back no longer. His temperament was, in fact, explosive, as we can see from his rubicund, choleric, though not unkindly face. Once his course of action was decided upon, he swept all before him, and it was at such times that he displayed an exhilaration that found vent in singing, as at Dunbar, or in rough horseplay, as when he inked the face of one of his fellow-judges when forcing through the signature of the King's death-warrant. His oratory is a series of involved, explosive periods, as if he were forcing a way to his meaning rough-shod over the niceties of language. He is his own best critic, where he frankly admits "We are . . . very swift in our affections and desires; and truly I am often judged for one that goes too fast that way, and it is the property of men that are as I am to be full of apprehensions that dangers are not so real as imaginary, to be always making haste".

Cromwell, in fact, had all the strength and all the weakness of a temperament exaggerately practical. He was wholly a man of expedients, and when sudden and overwhelming action was the thing called for, there were none who could stand against him. Whether, as at Winceby fight, it was a question of crashing down on the opposing squadrons without the customary halt to fire, or of putting down a mutiny by sharp, military justice, or dissolving a

Parliament that had got him into a corner, he was in his element. But such men are hardly capable of the calm, dispassionate thought, the power of impartially appreciating a situation, that builds not for the moment but for centuries. Carlyle, another impatient and passionate thinker, admired nothing so much in Cromwell as the part he took in the King's execution, which, whether it was a crime or not, was a ghastly blunder, and his dissolution of the Rump, which compelled him to twist constitutional bonds of sand for the rest of his life.

For such a man, the long and involved process of the English Common Law was bound to be viewed in the light of an intolerable hindrance. There was, in fact, an extreme similarity between Cromwell and Strafford, both men of imperious will. Strafford had expressed his scorn for Sir Edward Coke and his law books, but Cromwell, who was less of the fine gentleman, alluded to the sacred Magna Charta, in so Rabelaisian a fashion as to defy reproduction. His instinct, like that of Strafford, was to get things done without any pedantic scruples about the way of doing them. He went straight for what he honestly considered to be the good of the people, and if they were such fools as to place hindrances in his way, he would save them in spite of themselves. "That's the question," he says, "what's for their good, not what pleases them." And when he was once told that he would have nine men in ten against him, he promptly replied, "but what if I should disarm the nine and put a sword into the tenth man's hand?"

Cromwell's will was capable of leading him into dark and terrible courses, but no one not blinded by prejudice can doubt that his will was essentially sound, that he was a man of passionate honesty, a Mr. Greatheart, striving, without any thought of vulgar aggrandisement, to realize the noble and puissant nation of God's elect, of which he, no less than Milton, dreamed. His language about England is always that of a lover. "I will make the name of Englishman," he thundered, "as dreaded as that of Roman," and descending to a softer strain, "there is not a man of you would not desire to be found a good patriot. I know you would! But we are apt to boast sometimes that we are Englishmen; and truly it is no shame for us that we are Englishmen; but it is a motive for us to do like Englishmen, and to seek the real good of this nation and the interest of it." Such an ideal, Cromwell followed with all his strength and soul. The very bigness of his nature put him above the ordinary prejudices of his time and faith. When he was not sweeping to the accomplishment of his will, he was ever kindly. Even to the impossible Lilburne

he continued his pension, and to his interference James Nayler owed it that he was not starved to death in gaol. He was the most tolerant public man of his age, and beautifully said that if he had to be unjust he would rather that it were even to one of the elect than to an unbeliever.

Nevertheless, no man of equal stature has ever left so little behind him. His government was a series of improvisations, and if we have to class him, it should be with the series of statesmen who, numbering the two Cecils, Bacon, Strafford and Clarendon, believed in a strong executive, governing by the law, if possible, but at all costs governing without the constant amateur interference of a debating house. Seen from this standpoint, there is less difference in political, though a world in moral principle, between the two great Cromwells, Thomas and Oliver.

> " For forms of government let fools contest,
> Whate'er is best administered is best."

or as Wellington put it, "The King's government must be carried on," even, as Cromwell might have added, when the King's head is off. Oliver's foreign policy did indeed raise us again to the level of a first class power, but of his constitutional policy nothing was left because there was nothing to leave.

It was from men immeasurably inferior in character and practical ability that we obtain the utterance of ideas which, like those of the Ranters, seem to belong more to the twentieth century than the seventeenth, though some of them were the commonplaces of the French Revolution. The New Model Army, fresh from the victory over the King, became not only the centre of power but also of the most advanced thought in the country. It was a force unique among the armies of the world, not only from the spirit of intense if narrow virtue that inspired it, but from the fact that it was almost as representative and self-conscious a body of politicians as any Parliament. It forms the temporary and startling appearance on the stage of the English people. This had been the last thing intended by the rich and well-born politicians at Westminster, who were yielding to military necessity in taking to themselves this two-edged weapon, and if it did not escape the notice of the Cavaliers, it was only to make them cocksure of beating the half-trained rabble they expected to find at Naseby. But the army had come into being not only to beat the Cavaliers but to garner the fruits of the Reformation. From the very first, it had been the hotbed of religious extremes, and Cromwell had had enough trouble with the Presbyterian majority

of the Parliament to stop them from weeding out his best fighters on religious grounds.

When Parliament had the impudence to order the disbandment of its army without arrears of pay, the soldiers not only began to realize their power, but also the necessity of taking matters into their own hands. The real Parliament of the Kingdom became the Council of Officers, many of whom were men of low birth, and whose debates were not infrequently strengthened by the presence of " buff-coats ". The debates of this remarkable assembly were, by rare good fortune, taken down in shorthand, and have been republished by the Camden Society in the Clarke Papers. They form an extra-ordinary medley of philosophy and childishness. The whole subject of social philosophy is discussed from first principles; tags of the Old Testament are contributed by devout enthusiasts like Colonel Goffe, and at the solemn time when Charles was being brought to London to be killed, these commanders, who held the fate of King and Kingdom in their hands, were earnestly debating the claims of a poor woman called Elizabeth Poole to be inspired.

Cromwell, as usual, is all for what in modern slang would be called " cutting the cackle and getting to business ", he wants unity and united action before everything. The debate of principles is between his nephew, the lawyer-general Ireton, on the one hand, and the party descriptively enough called Levellers on the other, of whom the most doughty champion was a certain Colonel Rainborow, who, like some other extreme democrats, does not appear to have been universally popular, for when he went to be Vice-Admiral of the fleet he was not long in provoking a pro-Royalist mutiny. Rainborow was as absolute a believer in the abstract rights of man as Rousseau himself. " The poorest he that is in England," he said, " hath a life to live as the greatest he," and " therefore I do not think and am still of the same opinion, that every man born in England cannot, ought not, neither by the law of God nor the law of nature, to be exempted from the choice of those who are to make the laws for him to live under, and for him, for ought I know, to lose his life under."

Here is as frank and comprehensive a statement of the extreme radical position as could be wished for, and it must be remembered that this was no mere point of a debating club, but represented the opinion of men who, but for firm handling by Fairfax as well as Cromwell, might easily have got the mastery of the Kingdom. But abstract rights and the law of nature have never appealed to the English as they have to the French, and Ireton was more in sympathy

with the average Englishman when he countered Rainborow by arguing, in effect, that in chasing this phantom of abstract liberty he would be destroying all the concrete liberties of Englishmen which the law secured. Once you gave the vote—and the question is urgent now as then—what would become of property? Might not every man claim a natural right to his neighbour's goods? Was not the very right of electing representatives secured by the laws? "The law of God doth not give me property, nor the law of nature, but property is of human constitution. I have a property and this I shall enjoy. Constitution founds property."

So pleads the champion of constitutional right and things as they are, but the people's friend, no match for the skilled lawyer in debate, returns obstinately to his main point: "Sir, I see that it is impossible to have liberty but all property must be taken away. If it be laid down for a rule, and if you will say it, it must be so. But I would fain know what the soldier hath fought for all this while? He hath fought to enslave himself, to give power to men of riches, men of estates, to make him a perpetual slave." In this language might some modern democratic leader reply to an upholder of the existing system on the morrow of a greater war than any of which the Puritans dreamed. For these controversies are not settled in a debate, nor even in the course of centuries, and that between liberty and liberties touches the roots of British civilization.

Rainborow had rather weakly rebutted Ireton's thrust about the rights of property by talking as if the eighth commandment settled the whole matter. Such an illogical halt was by no means suited to the taste of the mere extreme Puritan democrats. There were some men in whom the fire of John Ball and Robert Ket was still smouldering, and only needed the Puritan spirit to fan it into a blaze. The common lands of England, they said, ought to be for the common people, in spite of all prescriptive and hindering rights. Some of these men formed a little sect called the Diggers, and with the naive optimism of men who verily believed that the triumph of the saints was making all things new, started to dig up some waste land on St. George's Hill at Kingston. "We desire," runs their manifesto, "no more than freedom to work and to enjoy the benefit of our labours —for here is waste land enough and to spare to supply all our wants— but if you deny this freedom, then in righteousness we must raise collections for the poor out of the estates, and a mass of money will not supply their wants."

The end was pathetic. Mr. Drake, the lord of the manor, had no

sympathy with abstract communism, and proceeded against them as ordinary trespassers. "They took away," says Winstanley, their leader, "the cows which were my livelihood and beat them with their clubs . . . and yet these cows never were upon George's Hill, nor never digged upon that ground, and yet the poor beasts must suffer because they gave their milk to feed me." The Diggers faded into obscurity, but there are ears in which their rude song will still find an echo:

> "To conquer them by love, come in now; come in now;
> To conquer them by love, come in now;
> To conquer them by love, as it does you behove,
> For He is King above, no power is like to love,
> Glory here, Diggers all!"

It would take too long to describe all the quaint and eager schemes that were inspired by the idea of realizing God's Kingdom on Earth. There were the stern Fifth Monarchy men, who preached a sort of Puritan Islam, and believed that the time had come for realizing, by the sword if necessary, the Kingdom of Christ foretold in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and of substituting for the law of England not the rights of man but the law of Moses. This sect was not even conquered by the Restoration, but broke out into desperate rebellion, easily quenched. Then there was the notion, widely prevalent at this time, and taking us forward to a fashion of Victorian history, that the rights of the free and virtuous English people had been taken away by the Norman tyrant of whom King Charles was the last representative, and that now, consequently, the people ought to come into their own again. It is not difficult to trace the connection between this theory, and the similar one propounded in France by the Huguenot Hotman, half a century previously, and, looking forward, we recognize in the capitalist, the villain of Karl Marx's social drama, this same imaginary Norman in a top hat instead of a helmet.

No review of this time, however brief, can fail to notice the least amiable and yet the most English figure of all, that of Colonel John Lilburne, "freeborn" as he was nicknamed. Lilburne had professed to belong to the party of the Levellers, and yet it is difficult to assign him to any party at all, so cross-grained was he. It was said that if nobody but John Lilburne were left in the world, John would fall to quarrelling with Lilburne. He was, in fact, of the party that is always "agin the government", litigiously insistent on his rights, and when he could not raise a grievance of his own, espousing those of other people. He had got himself whipped by the Star Chamber; he was for the army against its generals, for the merchants against

any regulation of trade, and the persistent opponent of Cromwell's government.

Little as he might appear to be qualified by disposition for being a popular favourite, the people were following a true instinct when they idolized " freeborn John ",

> " And what, shall honest John Lilburne die ?
> Three score thousand will know the reason why ! "

Armed with the works of Sir Edward Coke, whom indeed he closely resembled, he was too tough a nut for any government, even Cromwell's, to crack. Twice he was tried, twice a jury acquitted him, after he had fought his own case with consummate ability. Cromwell had taken his stand upon efficiency and what was good for the nation, Lilburne took his on what he called England's birthright and the rights, the legal and prescriptive rights, of the individual. It is also characteristic of him that he did not fail to remark that after all he was as good a gentleman as Cromwell. However that may have been, it is certain that in the controversy between the two, Lilburne's cause was as old as the Constitution, in which Cromwell's Instrument of Government was but a parvenu.

On the other hand we have the stern and aristocratic conception of liberty for which Milton gave his sight and Algernon Sidney his head. This is more inspired by Roman than by English precedent, and especially in Milton, has little enough connection with the democracy which is the power of the common people. Milton, indeed, is especially careful to distinguish between licence and liberty :

> " For who loves that must first be wise and good."

There was never anyone less of a democrat at heart than the proud, reserved defender of God's ways to man, and he would have liked to see in England something not dissimilar to the burgher oligarchy of Holland. Harrington, who dreamed of a republican and imperialist Utopia inspired by memories of Rome and the precept of Machiavelli, adopted a useful hint from the Licinian laws, and pointed out that the best prospect of liberty lay in an agrarian law, breaking up the big estates and limiting the amount of property that any man could hold in land.

The cult of Cromwell was naturally connected in many minds with that of sheer physical force and the strong man, though plenty of Continental precedent might have been pleaded for such a view, and the greatest of all contemporary philosophers, Baruch Spinoza, had been most open in basing right upon might. In England this

finds no more striking expression than in Andrew Marvell's Horatian Ode to Cromwell:

> "Though Justice against Fate complain,
> And plead the ancient rights in vain—
> Yet these must hold or break
> As men are strong or weak."

In 1651 appeared the *Leviathan* of Hobbes, in which might and right are almost the same thing.

This famous treatise, which stripped the last rags of divine sanction from human affairs, was, in spite of the pious qualifications by which the author saved his skin, a work of thorough-paced materialism. Hobbes employs the ordinary fiction of a social contract between natural men. Men are naturally, by his account, unmitigated egomaniacs, cave-men in the sense in which the word is used by Nietzschians and office boys. How such beings were ever more capable than the Kilkenny cats of entering into any compact or honouring it for a moment is a difficulty which Hobbes cuts through by the assumption that men did, somehow and at some time, agree to hand over irrevocably all their natural and individual rights to a Sovereign, whose powers consequently are and ought to be unlimited. The might of any sort of constituted government is, in fact, right, though what meaning right and wrong can have for what Hobbes calls men is not easy to fathom. However, no would-be despot, were he Lord Protector or monarch by Right Divine, would stand on fine points of psychology in face of so convenient a doctrine.

Finally, we must not fail to notice the great advance that was being made in the expression of public opinion. Already, during the civil war, journals, the ancestors of our modern newspapers, were being produced on both sides, and even after the Puritan triumph, the authorities had a hard task in tracking down unlicensed anti-government publications. But what was the most conspicuous feature of this time was the immense flood of pamphlet literature, in which everybody with views to express, from Milton down to the most insignificant crank or fanatic, took a hand. Lilburne alone was responsible for some hundred pamphlets. The method of thought of these polemics was not one calculated to produce enduring results, as the object was usually not to find the truth, but to annihilate an opponent as brutally as possible, point by point, and hitting freely below the belt. But, with all their faults, such publications at least allowed ideas to circulate as never before, and had the effect of drawing England closer into one nation united in spirit—a necessary prelude to Imperial expansion. And if all the other pamphlet

literature of that time were swept away, Milton's noble and far-sighted plea for the freedom of the press would still remain one of the proudest monuments of English thought.

8

The Nemesis of the Sword

It was for the Rump Parliament after the death of King Charles to define and sharpen the policy of commercial exclusiveness and imperial unity after which he, tentatively and with insufficient resources, had been feeling. Hardly had the domestic troubles been settled, than Parliament began to look abroad; they were compelled to do so by the fact that Prince Rupert and other Cavaliers had taken to the sea, and were preying on British shipping. This alone would have constituted sufficient reason for the efforts that were now made to construct a navy of overwhelming strength and at a cost undreamed of when the monarchy was striving, by driblets of ship-money, to maintain a bare minimum of national security. It was now found that, in the expressive imagery of Prynne, the little finger of the new government was thicker than the loins of old King Charles.

The policy of the Crown, bequeathed by the Tudors and forced by circumstances upon their naturally wasteful successors, was of necessity one of economy. In face of an unwilling Parliament, or in the absence of any Parliament, they had found it all they could hope for to pay their way from year to year. Charles I, during the period of his personal government, had had no army worth speaking of, and it was only by straining the law and the loyalty of his subjects almost to breaking point that he could maintain the most modest of navies. But now Parliament was saddled with a large and victorious army, which they could not disband if they would, and whose expenses swallowed up the greater part of a revenue undreamed of by Charles I. And to this army was being added an equally powerful and very expensive navy. Even before Cromwell assumed the reins of government, the road to ruin had been fairly taken, and it only remained to follow up a policy of armaments by its natural sequel of aggressive war to render a final crash inevitable.

Meanwhile Parliament, now as completely divorced from the constituencies as any despot could have been, was subsisting partly upon the proceeds of a capital levy, raised on the estates of the Church and Royalists, partly upon a drastic increase and stringency in the collection of the customs, and partly by adding to these an excise

on ale, meat, clothing, and other articles of common use. Whatever the constitutional aspects of the case may have been, there is no doubt that this indirect taxation fell more severely on the shoulders of the people than the old direct levies of benevolence and ship-money, which came mostly out of the pockets of the well-to-do. Even so, Parliament had the greatest difficulty in making ends meet, and a steadily increasing debt began to be carried over from year to year.

Nevertheless, a policy of peace and retrenchment, though obviously called for, was far from being to the taste of a government which had already flung aside all but the veneer of legality, whose only right to exist was that of the strongest, and which was already more the slave than the master of its armed forces. The Commonwealth itself was an adventure to be supported by a policy of adventure, and to settle down to the humdrum routine of peace was but to be left face to face with a constitutional problem that was really insoluble. The Parliament, therefore, had hardly finished with the Cavaliers before it was looking for fresh conquests overseas. In its choice of an enemy it was guided not by the pious desire of setting up God's Kingdom on earth, but by a shrewd business calculation of ridding our trade of its most dangerous rival. It was reserved for Calvinist England to turn on Calvinist Holland. For it must be remembered that behind the stern gentlemen of the Rump stood the slowly increasing middle class of London and the great trading ports, and where tradesman meets tradesman piety is apt to go by the board. The Dutch were never under any illusion about faith being stronger than business.

At first there were overtures for alliance, and it seemed as if these might have come to something when the virtual monarchy of the House of Orange was succeeded by a burgher oligarchy not at all unlike that obtaining in England. But the Dutch were out to drive a hard bargain, and the new militarism of England was not to be driven. So Parliament, in 1651, took the drastic step of formulating its colonial and economic policy in the great Navigation Act, which was only the development of a policy which had been pursued, on and off, ever since the reign of Richard II. By this Act, which confined the trade with England and the colonies, except as regards ships laden solely with the products of their native countries, to English owned and English manned ships, it was hoped to strike a decisive blow at the Dutch carrying and fishing trade. Whether it succeeded in doing so is, if we may trust so reliable an authority as

Dr. Cunningham, at least doubtful, but it is certain that in the colonies it caused a hardship and irritation that contributed in no small degree to their ultimate loss, and it did much to hinder the country from rising out of the trough of the severe trade depression that the Civil War, like other wars, had brought in its train. Its immediate effect was to precipitate war with Holland.

This was one of the most obstinate in which we have ever engaged; in numbers and bravery the navies were well matched, but the cumbrous methods of Dutch admiralty administration were a handicap more crippling than the limited sea experience of the officers of the New Model who blossomed into sailors. In a series of bloody and evenly contested battles the Dutch were driven back, still refusing to admit defeat, to their own coast. Meanwhile the same advantage of position that England was subsequently to have against Germany proved decisive against Holland. England stood on the flank of her opponent's communications, and was able to play havoc with the commerce on which she depended for her existence. The distress caused by our blockade, and not the victories of Blake, caused the Dutch to come to terms with Cromwell, who had now assumed the reins of government. For the satisfaction of injuring and humiliating Holland, England had considerably added to her own embarrassments, and the Protectorate was now, at the outset of its career, committed to an expenditure that it could only maintain by substituting force for law.

Cromwell, if we read his character aright, was a man of expedients, whose policy was guided less by calculation than by a volcanic will. Faced with a situation that demanded the utmost delicacy and patience, he preferred to cut the knot of his difficulties by the ruined gambler's expedient of doubling the stakes. Not content with the exhaustion produced by two civil wars and one foreign one, he must needs adopt an aggressive and militant policy by coercing Savoy, threatening the Pope, bombarding Tunis, and finally plunging into war with Spain. After first offering that country his alliance, upon terms that proved unacceptable, he swung round to the other extreme, publicly declared Spain to be the enemy of everything that was good, and proceeded to enter into alliance with France against her, a foolish step, for France was the rising as Spain was the declining power. The false analogy of the Elizabethan wars had engendered the notion that this war could be conducted at a profit, a grievous mistake now that we too had a colonial trade to be plundered.

As it turned out, there was plenty of glory but ruinous expense

Our first effort, an ill-organized attempt to seize the island of San Domingo by an army scraped together from the riff-raff of the colonies and such drafts as English colonels were glad to weed out of their regiments, bolted in disgraceful panic, but by the luck that has often attended us in our own despite, this same force managed to overwhelm a handful of Spaniards in the more valuable but less coveted island of Jamaica, which passed into our possession. Admiral Blake crowned his career by sinking the Spanish treasure fleet under the guns of Vera Cruz, though the treasure was recovered by its owners. English and Spanish played havoc with each others' commerce. Meanwhile a detachment of the New Model, co-operating with the French Marshal Turenne, had secured for England a prize that might have proved more fatal than the most annihilating defeat. For England had now the possession of a gate to the Continent, not this time at Calais but further to the East at Dunkirk. And there is every reason to believe that Cromwell not only intended, but would have been practically forced to use it.

For now his position, so strong in appearance, was in reality desperate. Never, certainly, had our prestige stood so high, now that we had helped France to put her most dangerous Continental rival out of the running, and thereby so upset the balance of power that it would cost us a succession of wars to prevent France from becoming the tyrant that the Spain of Philip II had aspired to be. But in achieving this somewhat equivocal triumph, the Protector had brought his government face to face with imminent bankruptcy. The war, that had been relied upon to relieve the government of its embarrassments, had but plunged it more hopelessly into the mire. Dr. Scott, in his invaluable book on Joint Stock Companies, has drawn a vivid picture of the pass to which reckless militarism had reduced the nation. "In 1657," he says, "the debt was described as 'insuperable', so that the public faith, on which loans had been raised, began to be known as 'the public despair'. Money was wanting to pay the pensions of wounded soldiers and of widows; contractors and officers were threatened with arrest, on account of liabilities conferred on behalf of the State, and still further debts were contracted through there being no funds to pay off ships on arrival, with the result that the crews were kept on the pay-roll. In 1658 the army was said to be going barefoot in winter time, and their 'clamours' as well as those of the navy, were so great that they could scarcely be borne!"

The annual deficits of the new government were now greater

than the whole revenue of the King whose rigour in exacting it had provoked a revolution. Cromwell was faced with a harder problem than his victim, except for the fact that he had a contempt for legality such as Charles had never displayed, and a force to back him such as Charles had never possessed. But try as he would, no Parliament that he could get together could be persuaded to find the wherewithl for him to make ends meet. With his unfailing instinct for cutting the knot, he came down and turned his last Parliament out of doors with a thunder of flaming eloquence. "May God be judge between me and you!" he concluded, and some there were who answered "Amen." This was certainly magnificent, but it left him further off than ever from the means of paying his way. The capital levy, which had been such an invaluable standby to the Rump, was exhausted, and to make matters worse, the country was sinking into a trade depression that not only multiplied unemployment and distress, but was bound to affect the revenue.

The one way to relieve the situation was the one that Cromwell dared not adopt, which was to disband the army whose maintenance was swallowing the bulk of the revenue, and to cut down the navy to a pre-revolution standard. But nobody knew better than the Lord Protector that the army was now the sole thing that stood between him and ruin. He had, in his own expressive phrase, disarmed nine men and put a sword into the hand of the tenth, and it was by the naked sword that he was now reduced to govern. Even so, it was doubtful whether he could find the means of keeping his army in being. One fatal expedient remained which, if he had lived a year or two longer, would have been practically forced upon him, and must have been in his mind when he secured his gate to the Continent at Dunkirk. He had still his dazzling prestige and the finest army in Europe, troops who had shewn themselves more than a match for the veteran infantry of Spain. The role of Protestant champion was one in which Cromwell had already figured; the saints of Europe might yet welcome another and greater Gustavus Adolphus; a war such as this *might* pull the whole nation together. Such a war was the logical culmination of the Protectorate, and there can be little doubt that the Lord would soon have informed Cromwell of its necessity.

But his good fortune held to the end. September 3rd had been his lucky day, but the crowning mercy of all fell on him when, with a prayer of beautiful humility on his lips and imploring pardon on those who, with eerie prescience, he foresaw would desire to "trample

on the dust of a poor worm ", his stormy spirit passed out upon the storm, and he was saved from being associated perhaps with another Agincourt, but certainly from bringing misery and ultimate disaster upon the land he loved so well.

9

The Fruits of Puritanism

No sooner was Oliver in the grave, than the whole edifice of his government began crumbling to pieces. There stepped into his place his son Richard, or, as he was nicknamed, Tumbledown Dick, a modest and inoffensive gentleman who has been subjected to a vast amount of contumely, because he had the rare good sense to retire from a hopeless task without fuss or bloodshed. The army, now that their leader was gone, split up into factions. The cleverest of the generals, Monk, keeping his head and restraining his ambition in a situation of the utmost delicacy, managed to get control of affairs and give back to the Long Parliament its Presbyterian majority, who, thoroughly embittered by the treatment they had received at the hands of the Independents, hastened to bring back the monarchy without exacting conditions. They had their reward when they, like their rivals, were swept down the flood of triumphant, vindictive Royalism.

So, in ruin and humiliation, closed the reign of the saints which it had cost so much blood and tears to establish. As a political factor, Puritanism was discredited. Whatever form of government the country might tolerate, it was certain that never again would it submit to such a discipline of gloom as the preachers had sought to impose upon it, and not for a long time to come would it allow its liberties to be curtailed by a standing army. Revolution, if it had got to come, would be conducted on very different principles. Protestantism, if it had got to stay, would stop short of protesting overmuch.

Not only politically but socially was Puritanism discredited by the Restoration. Charles II very neatly summed up the prevailing opinion when he remarked that it was no fit religion for a gentleman. In the time of the last King it had been professed by many of the greatest in the land, and was not inconsistent with a refined pursuit of the joy and colour of life. Colonel Hutchinson, so lovingly described by his wife, represents the best type of Puritan gentleman, of dignified and gracious manners, a scholar and a connoisseur, and withal a great lover. John Milton was probably the most cultivated man of

his time, gathering into his one brain the choicest beauty of classical antiquity, of Hebrew civilization and of the Renaissance. These, the aristocarcy of Puritanism, left few, if any, direct successors. The Whigs, upon whom the championship of Parliament against the court devolved, were distinguished for anything rather than a real or affected strictness of life, and the Dissenters who clung to their faith after the dark days of the Clarendon Code were of plebeian, or at most of middle class origin.

And yet the work of Puritanism was not cut short by its eclipse; in the deepest sense it may be said that it was only beginning. During its brief triumph it had perhaps destroyed more than it had set up. It had done incalculable harm by the barbarous havoc it had made with works of ancient beauty, it had done its gloomy best to convert merrie into dismal England, and it cannot be said to have compensated for this by any permanent achievement of commanding excellence. A series of bloody wars, with their attendant glory and waste, some unsuccessful experiments in constitution-making, one or two immortal sonnets and an ode by Cromwell's secretaries, Milton and Marvell, one or two excellent books of devotion, at least one, out of a multitude of pamphlets, that is fit to survive, the *Oceana* of Harrington, the speeches of Cromwell, and our blundering into the possession of a West Indian island, are the chief positive achievements that Puritanism has to show during the hour of its triumph. Compared with others in our history, this might be described as a barren if not a destructive epoch.

It was in its eclipse and persecution that Puritanism produced its noblest work. Milton, no longer moved by a sense of duty to write classical Billingsgate against opponents who should have been beneath his notice, turned his powers to the composition of the epics of Creation and Redemption, and his sombre drama of blinded Samson, triumphing, even in death, over his persecutors—a message of invincible hope. It was in a Restoration jail that the tinker Bunyan caught the Hebrew secret of telling a story with a vividness and simplicity that makes Apollyon as real a figure to most of us as the Kaiser, and Vanity Fair as familiar as the West End. The best work of George Fox, perhaps the greatest of English mystics, and of William Penn, in some respects the most remarkable Puritan of them all, were given to the world after the Restoration. No one, we imagine, of taste or discernment would, if the choice were forced upon him, hesitate to sacrifice all the products of triumphant for those of defeated Puritanism.

But it is not by such definite achievements that Puritanism is to be judged. It was not only a doctrine but a spirit, and as such it had already, by the Restoration, penetrated inexpungably every department of English life. The King enjoyed his own again, nine tenths of the nation were united in a passionate determination to reverse the tyranny of the elect; but the work that was done could not be undone, things could never be the same as they were before. The maypole might be set up and the congregation get gloriously drunk at Church ales, but the fact remains that the Sunday taboo, a refinement even on Calvinism, not only survived, but became a symbol and a rallying point for those who were assured of an invincible wrath, on the part of the Almighty, against the worldly enjoyment of His creatures. Merrie England had, in fact, been on the wane ever since the days of Elizabeth, and it had received from the Puritans a blow from which it never recovered. England might be more prosperous than ever before, but it could never be so lighthearted. The Puritans had knocked too much colour not only out of the Church windows, but out of life itself.

This was a heavy price, but, as some may contend, not too heavy to pay for the course of discipline by which the Puritans had succeeded in arresting what might almost be described as the spiritual rot that had set in since the great days of Elizabeth. The inspired *joie-de-vivre* that had marked the climax of resistance to Spain had even then concealed a certain lack of depth and concentration, and as inspiration cooled down, in the drama, in poetry, in life itself, insincerity and indiscipline became more and more apparent. The grim determination of the Puritan to get to the truth at all costs, the austere discipline, inward and spiritual no less than outward and visible, by which he regulated his life, had at least the effect of bringing back art and life face to face with reality.

Much was lost, and perhaps would have been lost even if there had been no Puritanism at all. In poetry there was none to carry on the torch of Milton and Marvell, and the far-fetched conceits of courtly lyrists died away in the rhymed rationalism of an age essentially unpoetic. The Castaras and Clarastellas of the seventeenth are at least preferable to the Delias and Belindas of the eighteenth century. But it was good that the gorgeous yet sprawling Caroline prose should be chastened and ordered into an instrument capable of expressing in the simplest possible terms the thought or story of its author. It was good too that in architecture a Sir Christopher Wren should say, with clear-cut directness, what he had to say, rather than

what, by more religious or ornate standards, he ought to have said. It was good that statesmanship should devote itself steadily and consistently to a policy, even if its ends were low and material, as were those of the Mercantile System. If the nation lost in colour, in exuberance, in pageantry, it gained in earnestness and the capacity for sustained effort which is the first requisite for an Imperial destiny —all that the Roman had comprehended by his word *gravitas*.

Moreover Puritanism, by plumbing the depths of the soul, had aroused an interest in character that was to bear abundant fruit. It is possible to forget the allegory of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and look upon it as the first readable novel in English, and the Puritan Defoe has sometimes, and with plausibility, been called the father of the English novel. Scarcely less important is the influence of Puritanism on the study of character in portrait painting, a development we have yet to trace. The habit of introspection had, in fact, been planted and taken root in the English temperament. And along with this went the habit of dissent, the impulse to question authority and refer all problems to the tribunal of human reason. The Ranters and Levellers had shown to what lengths this could be pushed, and the time was coming when men would be as protestant against the Scriptures as against the Papacy—Bunyan and Baxter did not more thoroughly embody the English Nonconformist spirit and tradition than Herbert Spencer.

As in art and thought, so in industry Puritanism had consequences of the utmost importance. When the fine gentlemen, who had dominated the original Long Parliament, fell away from the movement, it became more and more distinctively middle class. The typical Dissenter—to give the Puritan his new title—is represented by the Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive, who conduct the dialogue of Bunyan's Mr. Badman. These are grave, independent men in a small way of business, very keenly alive to the main chance, and yet with a high ideal of honesty and just dealing. The Puritan discipline may have originated in the service of God, but it was equally effective for that of Mammon.

We no longer hear of the jolly free-handed type of employer represented by Jack of Newbury; gone too are the cultured and luxury-loving merchant princes that we meet with in the Stonor and Cely letters. The new man of business is above caring for such unbusinesslike vanities. He goes about the task of increasing production with the same austere concentration that he devotes to the salvation of his soul. Idleness he abhors, and is not prepared

to tolerate it in anybody under his control. He is a hard, though he may be a just and conscientious taskmaster. He will take care that his apprentices are duly sermonized on the Lord's day, but he will not, if he can help it, provide them with the means or the leisure for worldly enjoyment. The old gild atmosphere, with its conviviality and mystery plays, is incredibly remote from this new, strenuous, colourless existence. But upon such foundations is industrial supremacy built.

How far the Puritan spirit is responsible for the ruthless, economic individualism that ran riot during the eighteenth century is no easy matter to decide. Certainly the Puritan was an individualist, and a rebel against the old standards inculcated by the Church, which did at least make some organized attempt to temper business with charity, and to limit the business man's right to do what he liked with his own. The Court of High Commission, which had, however clumsily, tried from time to time to check the abuses of usury, was swept away by the Long Parliament, and nothing was put in its place at the Restoration.

It is unfair, however, to saddle the Puritan with the responsibility for a state of things which would probably have come to pass without his assistance. The materialism of the Restoration was more directly conducive to selfishness than the enthusiasm of the Commonwealth. To Bunyan, sharp practice in business was not the least of Mr. Badman's qualifications for a warm eternity, to Hobbes it would have seemed the most ordinary outcome of man's natural propensity for feathering his own nest.

Those who point to the ways of middle-class tradesmen and business men as the proof of Puritan influence, are apt to lose sight of the fact that the most notorious economic men of the eighteenth century were the pushing, agricultural gentlemen who were responsible for the Enclosure Acts. And as for the Poor Law, the Act which kept the poor man a slave, tied to his own parish without a chance of bettering his conditions, was passed by the Cavalier Parliament in the first flush of anti-Puritan reaction. Vaster and more gradual forces were at work than the consciousness of that time realized, and Cavalier and Puritan, old saint and new rationalist, were borne along the drift of the same current.

It must not be forgotten that Puritanism, in its heyday, was not by any means so homogeneous a thing as might be supposed. We may distinguish two main streams of tendency, one aristocratic and only half Puritan, and one which is of the undiluted Puritan

spirit. Milton and Colonel Hutchinson were Puritans, but they were something else too; even to the austere close, Milton was never able to drive out the Elizabethan that was half of his genius—never could he have humbled himself to equality with the least of his brethren in Christ—and Hutchinson differed little from the best type of Cavalier. Theirs was, in truth, a compromise with incipient Whiggism, in the days when it was yet possible, in the general estimation, to be a Puritan and a gentleman, and they left none to succeed them. But men like Fox and Bunyan were Puritans and nothing else, men whose whole concern was with the saving of their souls, and to whom the elegancies and refinements of life were very vanity. They might have endorsed Charles II's stricture in the sense that the life of a gentleman is wholly unworthy of one of God's elect. It was these men who handed on the torch of Puritanism, and who were the true spiritual fathers of English Nonconformity.

But if in England the elect were persecuted and suppressed, there was no abatement of the Puritan spirit or authority in the New England across the seas. It is thither that we must look for the strongest current of the Puritan stream. There the reign of the elect was no temporary experiment, but based on impregnable foundations, and to the existing colonies was added one still more remarkable, Pennsylvania, founded by Penn, the disciple and successor of the Quaker Fox, and inspired by a sober and practical determination to make the reign of love and tolerance a reality. Even an Indian was treated as a man and a brother, amenable to the influence of good faith and fair dealing. And in the stern and intolerant communities to the North, an ideal of life and culture was established the continuity of which was not to fail, until New England had stood in the forefront of the struggle against arbitrary power in the eighteenth and slavery in the nineteenth century, and until it had produced the most brilliant galaxy of literary talent that has, as yet, adorned the Western Hemisphere.

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